

ANTS



Ants are one of the most common pests found in homes. More than 12,000 species exist throughout the world. Some ant

species can bite and/or sting humans. Stings can cause life threatening allergic reactions for some people. Ants can also spread food-borne diseases such as salmonella.

Description

Ants are “social” insects. They live in large families called colonies. Within each colony, there are divisions of labor and specialized ant “castes” (hills) for each division. There may be one or more queens whose job is reproduction. Males can be present, but their job is only to mate with the queen. Worker ants are all female, but they cannot reproduce, and they are generally all sisters to one another. There can be many different sizes of workers ranging from the minimums (smallest) to the majors and/or soldiers (largest) who generally defend the colony. Winged ants are often mistaken for winged termites. They can be distinguished using three characteristics:

- Ants have a thin waist, termites do not.
- Ant hind wings are smaller than the forewings.
- Ants have elbowed antennae, while termite antennae are straight.

Life Cycle

Eggs are laid by a mated queen ant. After the eggs hatch, they are fed by worker ants until they pupate. The pupae transform into sterile female adult workers, who are incorporated into the

colony to perform various duties, generally depending upon their age. Only the oldest worker ants are found outside the colony foraging for food. When the colony is “mature,” winged male and female ants are produced to leave the nest, mate, and begin new colonies.

Monitoring

Monitor for ants near food or moisture sources. Inspect under sinks, in cupboards, along pipes, and along electrical wires. Look for large trails of ants or for just a few stragglers. Stragglers are scouts randomly searching for food or nesting sites.

Cultural Methods

When you spot ant trails, try to follow the ants to where they are entering the building and to the nest. Look for holes or cracks in foundations or walls, and caulk them to prevent entry. Store food items such as sugar, syrup, honey, and pet food in closed containers that have been washed to remove residues from outer surfaces. Rinse out empty pop cans or remove them from the building. Thoroughly clean up any food spills. Remove garbage daily and change liners frequently.

Pesticides

Baits are the most effective control method for ant control. Essential characteristics of a good baiting system are a food source that attracts the ants and a slow-acting, non-repellent insecticide such as fipronil or hydramethylnon. For best results, place baits along the wall and in the path of ant trails. Change the bait every couple of weeks to keep the food attractant fresh.

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