

House Ants and Their Control



Flying Ant

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Flying Termite

In New Jersey, more than a dozen different species of ants can become established in dwellings. Some of them are structural pests such as the black carpenter ant. Others take advantage of the design or type of building construction, as is true for the pavement ant in slabs or split-level construction. Tiny pharaoh ants require the warmth in dwellings to survive in our latitude. Other ants just wander indoors and become a nuisance.

Long-range control involves structural and/or environmental changes to make conditions less attractive to a particular species of ant, while retaining a functional value for the dwelling and its occupants. Some changes may be expensive, such as roof, window, and door repairs or replacements due to moisture problems. Other modifications are a normal part of structural maintenance (caulking, weather stripping, etc.). Insecticides provide only “temporary relief.” After losing their effectiveness, however, the structural and/or environmental condition remains and another group of ants move in.

Information on carpenter ants and their control appears in this fact sheet: *The Black Carpenter Ant and Its Control*, FS006. Copies may be obtained from either your County Cooperative Extension Office, listed in the phone book under county government or on the website www.rce.rutgers.edu.

All ant colonies are started by females, commonly called “queens.” When fully grown, both

females and males develop wings. On “swarming” or leaving the ant colony in which they developed, the males and females mate. After mating, the female seeks out a crevice or similar hiding place. Then she bites off her wings. Soon she lays a few eggs that hatch into very small white, blind, legless grubs. The queen ant feeds these grubs or larvae with a nutritious fluid that forms in her digestive system. When the grubs are fully-grown, they change into a nonfeeding pupal stage from which emerge the common “worker” ants. These workers begin to forage for food, some of which is fed to the queen and some to the new larvae from the next lot of eggs. Thus, a new colony is formed.

It is important to realize that ant colonies contain immature stages, which later develop into familiar and recognizable adults. Thus, a continuous supply of ants is generated in the colony. Sometimes control measures (use of insecticides) requires repeated treatments to eliminate the sustained production of new ants. Most treatments reduce adult populations, but not the immature ants protected in the nest.

During the summer, ants may wander into homes from nests located adjacent to the foundation, under sidewalks, or in lawns. Occasional ant invaders can be crushed or destroyed in another convenient manner. To reduce the number of ants that enter homes, it is necessary to follow good sanitary practices.



Remove garbage daily; do not keep it indoors overnight. Clean up all liquid spills as soon as possible. Keep floors, chairs, and counter tops free from crumbs and scraps of food. Do not allow pet food containers to remain open for extended periods of time. Cover candy and other sweets with properly fitted lids. Prevent the availability of soft and decaying fruit by periodic inspections every 2 or 3 days. Remember, most house-infesting ants are tiny and require very small quantities of food for survival.

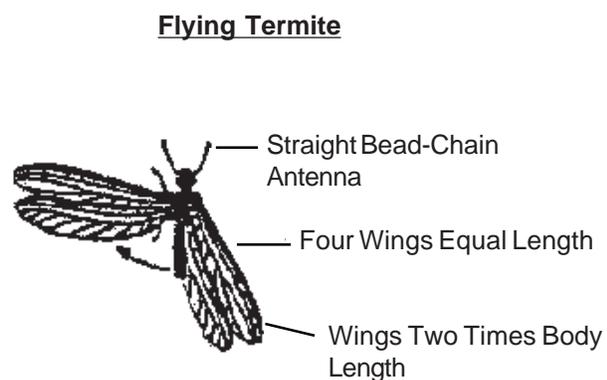
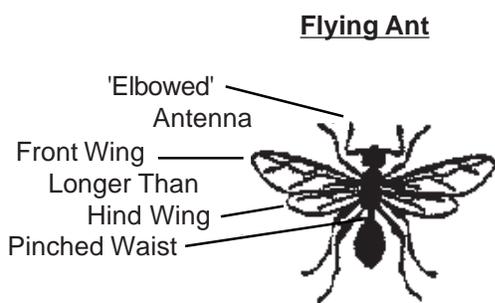
If it becomes necessary to use an insecticide, read the label before making a purchase. Be certain that it indicates ants and indoor use. Read all precautions and methods of application, and follow directions EXACTLY.

Insecticides for indoor use include materials such as boric acid, and bendicarb. Apply to baseboards, cracks, door and windowsills, and frames. Follow the ants to determine where they are entering. Concentrate the control where ants are

observed. Be precise when applying insecticides; it is probably unnecessary to treat all rooms.

Outdoor control measures involve spraying the base of the outside foundation to a height of 2 or 3 feet, especially where the ants are more active or may find an entrance. Specific areas to consider include: window and door sills and frames, around and under porches, patios, garages or carports, flower boxes, and sidewalks adjacent to the foundation. Suitable insecticides for outdoor use include those listed in a preceding paragraph, plus carbaryl (Sevin).

Persistent household ant problems require the services of a pest control operator. Insecticide concentrations available to the general public may provide only temporary control. Professional pest control operators are experienced and can treat "hard to reach" areas such as wall voids, under slabs, and hidden nooks and crannies found in old and new construction.



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