

ANTS



Class: Insecta



Order: Hymenoptera



Family: Formicidae



Introduction:

There are more than 500 species of ants in the U.S. Some species are attracted to leftovers & spilled food while others species are fond of either, meats, fatty or oily foods, or sweets. Some ant species can deliver a painful bite while others sting. Other species, of ants, may protect &/or encourage plant pests such as, mealybugs & aphids. Ants, however can become a nuisance when encounter in the home, at picnics, during outdoor play, and especially if suffering from bites, or even worse stings.

Ants are social insects that live in large colonies in soil or in dead wood. To every colony there are three distinct castes: Queens, males, & workers. Some species may have multiple queens per colony while other species have only one queen. The queen has only one function, reproduction. Common features of queens, that set them apart from the other ants are, queens are larger than workers, they have a trio of simple eyes located at the top of their head, & the queen sheds her wings after mating. The prime objective for male ants (drones) is to mate with virgin queens. After the mating process the drone dies. Drones have wings that they do not shed as well as a trio of simple eyes located at the top of their head. Male ants are smaller than the Queen yet they are larger than workers. Worker ants have large compound eyes, little heads, and weak mandibles (lower jaw). The worker ants defend & enlarge the nest, forage for food, tend to the larvae & pupae, as well as making sure the queen(s) are healthy & satisfied. Worker ants are incapable of mating & only in certain situations will they lay eggs. Since these eggs are sterile they either fail to develop or produce only males. Worker ants are most commonly seen out of the nest & never winged.

Ants can be a combination of 2 different colors to a solid color of either red, brown, black, & sometimes yellow. Some ants have 2 pairs of wings with the front pair noticeably larger than the hind wings. Winged ants sometimes get confused with termites. One identifying factor distinguishing ants from termites is ants have compound eyes where as termites have no eyes.

Development:

Ants go through complete metamorphose (egg, larva, pupa, adult). The eggs of ants are very tiny, often go unnoticed, usually white in color, & are found in clusters in nest chambers. Larvae have a slight curve shape & are legless. The next stage is the pupa stage where a cocoon may or may not be spun. Cocoon or no cocoon the fully developed larva sheds its skin (molts) & transforms into the adult stage. Initially, after transformation, the ant is white in color with all appendages curled close to the body. As the pupa matures it gradually changes to the colors of the adult and eventually molts and emerges as a new adult member of the colony.

Control:

If an ant infestation has occurred it is best to call your local vector control agency for assistance. Vector control can analyze the situation & assist you on what needs to be done. The correct method for controlling ants is highly dependent on: the ant specie involved in the infestation, the nature of the infestation, and the location of the infestation. Identification of the ant specie will help with knowing where &/ how to begin. Vector control can also aid in proper specie identification. **Never use pesticides inconsistence with label instruction.**