

PEST CONTROL ADVICE SHEET

ANTS



APPEARANCE AND HABITS

The ant which gives rise to most annoyance in the average domestic dwelling is the Black Ant or Common Garden Ant.

As its name implies, this is a black ant although more accurately it is of a blackish-brown colour. It varies in size from 3-5mm (1/10th" to 2/10ths").

The Common Black Ant lives out of doors where it can be found nesting in cracks in lawns, around and under stones, at the roots of many plants on which black and green fly are feeding, between bricks in walls, in crazy paving and many other places. Around buildings, the nest opening may be distinguished by small piles of fine earth brought up from under the flagstones etc.

The ants invade buildings in search of food, particularly sugar and other sweet materials, for example: jam, honey, treacle etc.

LIFECYCLE

The gregarious habits of ants have resulted in the development of a caste system, whereby individuals are responsible for specialised duties within the community.

There are: workers (sterile females), fertile males and queens (fertile females). The worker ants build and extend the nest, look after the larvae forms and forage for food, whereby they become pests. The queens do none of these duties, but remain almost exclusively within the nest. Mating amongst sexual individuals takes place on the wing. These spectacular swarms involve large numbers of ants and take place between mid-July and mid-September. The actual swarms only persist for 2-3 hours. After mating the males perish, but the females shed their wings and dig a cell in the soil where they over-winter. The eggs are laid in late spring and the white legless larvae hatch 3-4 weeks later. The larvae are fed on secretions from the queen's salivary glands until fully grown, when they will pupate, forming the well known "ant eggs". From these pupae emerge the first brood of worker ants. These tend subsequent broods. The sexual forms are not produced until late summer. The entire cycle takes about 2 months to complete. Under favourable conditions a nest may persist for several years.

TREATMENT

Because of the very large number of ants usually involved in an infestation, there is no quick or easy method of clearing a house of these pests. It will most likely be found necessary to carry on the treatment over a long period of time, with constant attention to detail and frequent applications of insecticides.

TREATMENT TECHNIQUE - INSIDE

Locate nesting area if possible, and destroy by spraying insecticide near to the nest or on to cracks beneath which nests are located. Spray cracks behind mouldings, around window and door frames, around kitchen cupboards, shelves, sinks, bath etc. Do not use excessive amounts of spray and **do not use spray near uncovered food**.

All sweet foods should be kept in containers with tight fitting lids, crumbs swept up and as little waste food as possible left lying about.

TREATMENT TECHNIQUE - OUTDOORS

Here again, it is desirable to locate the nesting area and destroy by spraying near the nest or in cracks beneath which nests are located. Any soil near to the house wall and entrance doors, steps etc should be dug over and kept free of grass and weeds, lawns mowed at frequent intervals and the garden generally kept in a tidy condition. Cracks in brickwork, concrete steps and round the external frame of doors and windows should also be treated.

Most garden centres, chemists and hardware stores sell a variety of modern insecticides which are specifically designed to kill garden ants.

In areas where Black Ants are a regular problem, treatments should commence in late spring.

SAFETY ADVICE

When using insecticides:

- 1 Care should be taken not to spray near uncovered food.
- 2 They should be stored in a cool dry place.
- 3 They should be stored where children cannot reach them.
- 4 Always wash hands after using insecticides.