

Getting to know... ANTS

Have you ever wondered why it is that you don't seem to be able to get rid of ants?



Bigheaded ants descending on a specially prepared energy-rich, sugar bait.

Even after you have emptied half a can of aerosol insecticide on them, they seem to return with a vengeance!

This is because the ants you attack are only the foragers and they make up about 10% of the ants in a colony. It is estimated that for every human on earth, there are 1 million ants.

There will be a continuous supply of ants because like the queen termite, the queen ant is an egg-producing machine. She can live up to 15 years, doing nothing except laying eggs, eggs and more eggs. To lay fertilised eggs, the queen ant needs to be inseminated only once by a male, who must find it a demanding task because it dies a few days later.

The foragers you see are actually female ants, called worker ants, and they can live up to 7 years. They, together with the others hidden in the nest, do all the work in the colony - gathering food, caring for the young, enlarging the nest and defending the nest. Once they find a food source, they secrete a pheromone trail that marks a path for the others to follow. They are able to maintain a straight path by using the sun as a navigational point.

Ants are beneficial to us humans because they help in plant pollination, soil aeration and they eat up dead leaves, insects and even animals. They become a nuisance when they enter our habitat to consume our food provisions, and damage fruits and seeds planted in the garden. Because they visit all sorts of places like garbage bins and drains, they may carry bacteria on their bodies and contaminate our food, thus transmitting diseases and causing food poisoning.

Some ants sting but the most repulsive have been overseas reports about ants feeding on the wounds of burn victims in hospitals and also in intravenous bottles in intensive care units.


In Singapore, pest ants can be divided into three groups, based on their typical nesting preferences:

1. **Tree-nesting ants**
(e.g. Kerengga ants, *Oecophylla smaragdina*)
2. **Wall-nesting ants**
(e.g. Pharaoh ants, *Monomorium pharaonis*), and
3. **Ground-nesting ants**
(e.g. Bigheaded or Garden ants, *Pheidole* spp.).

The best way to control ants is through prevention by observing these simple rules.

- a. **Avoid attracting ants by keeping all areas free of food particles, especially if you keep pets.**
- b. **Store food in airtight containers and wipe clean any remnants left on the outside.**
- c. **Clean up spilled sweet drinks and food immediately.**
- d. **Do not keep soiled cooking utensils overnight but wash them immediately after a meal.**
- e. **Throw food wastes and unwanted leftovers in plastic bags and tie the bags up before you dispose of them into garbage bins or refuse chutes.**

Where an infestation exists, the ant nest must be located and destroyed with any aerosol can of insecticide. One trick you can employ is to give an ant a particle of food and follow it back to its nest. Then ZAP!

Insecticide-laced baits can also be used but this is time-consuming. Of course if the problem persists, call Aardwolf Pestkare. We have an arsenal of methods. 

Suggestion from a friend of Aardwolf Pestkare:
"Satisfaction Guaranteed or your pest refunded!"