

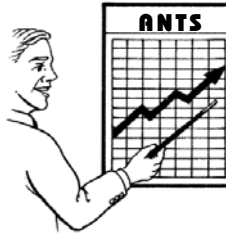
Ant Season is Upon Us!

Every year we hear stories about huge numbers of ants invading buildings. As ant experts, we are never surprised by these stories. The fact is, ants are a problem year-round, but it's at this time of year that ant colonies are growing larger as each week passes.

Ant problems continue to be the #1 pest problem in the country, with more households complaining about them than any other pest. They are almost a universal problem, partly because there are so many different kinds of ants. While some species nest outdoors, many others often bring their entire colony indoors. They are quite adept at finding a way inside!

Ants coming inside may have already established an indoor nest, or they are looking for food or moisture. Scout ants quickly alert the colony when they found a good food source. Ants eat basically what we eat, plus other foods. They have definite food preferences. Some are sweet-eating ants, others look for high-protein foods, or oils, grease, and fats, and others will switch, depending on the colony needs, from sweets to proteins within just a few hours.

Killing ants one by one is useless.



The queens produce eggs faster than you can pick off the workers. The entire colonies need to be controlled; how that is done depends on which ant species you have. Call us if you are having ant problems. You can also give this newsletter to a friend or neighbor who has ant problems so they can call us for an appointment and be rid of these persistent invaders. They'll thank you!

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Ripe fruit on trees or on the ground in the summer and fall becomes food for yellowjackets, wasps, ants, flies, and a host of other insect pests, as well as rats, raccoons, and other animal pests. Keep ripe fruit picked on trees and picked up from the ground to avoid attracting and feeding pests.

Lyme Disease is on the Rise

A number of states are reporting another increase in Lyme disease cases this year. This is partly due to larger deer populations. Deer are an important host for the ticks that transmit Lyme disease, and deer wander around and spread ticks to new locations. The wet spring has also resulted in larger rodent populations. Rodents, especially mice, are another important host for these ticks, and they are the main reservoir of the Lyme disease bacterium.

Unfortunately, in the last few years Lyme disease has increased. Over 25,000 new cases being are reported each year, making this one of the most common vector-borne diseases in the nation. Many more cases go unreported or misdiagnosed, so no one knows the true number of new cases. We do know that the number of dogs and cats infected with

Lyme disease each year is much higher than the numbers of humans.

Lyme disease in people causes fever, body aches, and head aches. It is characterized by a 'bull's eye' rash around the bite site starting from 3 to 30 days after the bite. However, the rash does not develop in all cases and disappears after a few days. It is important to treat the disease early with antibiotics prescribed by a doctor, because if left untreated, some people may develop severe arthritis and muscle and joint aches.

Some important measures to help prevent being bitten and infected by ticks include:

- Reduce numbers of ticks and rodents.
- Reduce or restrict numbers of deer.
- When in tick infested areas, use Deet.
- Whenever you have been outdoors, inspect your body and clothing for ticks.



Ant Invaders Change Ecosystems

A new study looks at one of the problems pests cause when they invade new areas. It is now well known that when Argentine ants (originally from South America) move into a new area, smaller numbers of native ants are overwhelmed and displaced by the numerous invaders. Unlike Argentine ants, some of the native ants are known to have an important role in nature as seed dispersers. The study found *92 percent fewer* native ant seed dispersers after Argentine ants moved in.

Such a drastic change in seed dispersal means that invaders like Argentine ants could cause a shift in plant diversity that can change the makeup of an entire ecosystem. More and more, we are beginning to understand that invasive species like insect and rodent pests have a very negative effect on native ecosystems.



Fire Ants Spreading

Imported fire ants, hated for their painful stings and other problems they cause, are spreading in and around Great Smoky Mountains National Park. These ants often 'hitch hike' to new areas on landscaping material, and landscaping and road equipment. Because of rapid development in and around the park in recent years, fire ants have been colonizing new areas. They are expected to spread even further because the park received \$77.5 million in federal stimulus money for repaving and building projects.

Major road projects greatly accelerate the ability of fire ants to spread to new areas, partly by increasing the survivability of the queens starting new colonies. Fire ant queens survive better where there is newly disturbed, bare ground where they can dig in quickly.

School Is Out!

Be sure to keep any poisonous substances in locked cabinets, or at least well out of reach of children. This includes all medicines, cleaning substances, auto maintenance supplies, pesticides, and fertilizers.



BE SAFE!

Your Questions Answered

Q. Does Taking Vitamin B-1 Help Prevent Mosquito Bites?

A. We occasionally hear people recommend taking Vitamin B-1 to help prevent mosquito bites. This dates back to some studies in the 1960's that suggested that taking B-1 supplements three times a day helped produce a skin odor that mosquitoes found repulsive.



But multiple tests since then have shown that B-1 does NOT keep mosquitoes away—not even a little. In one eight week study, one group of people took daily vitamin B supplements, another group took vitamin C, and a third took no supplements. Once every two weeks, swarms of mosquitoes were allowed to bite the people. Neither vitamin supplement reduced mosquito bites. Another study found vitamin B-1 also does not reduce the number of mosquito bites on pets.

In fact, for the most part there is no evidence that what we eat changes how attractive we are to mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are primarily attracted to the carbon dioxide (and lactic acid) we produce when we respire. (That's why bigger people, and more active people, are more likely to be bitten—they are producing more carbon dioxide.) Pregnant women are twice as likely to be bitten by mosquitoes as nonpregnant women, but it is not because of changes in hormones. It is simply because they produce more carbon dioxide and have higher body temperatures, which allows mosquitoes to find them more easily.

We also produce a complex concoction of body odors—some of these attract and some strongly repel mosquitoes. These are still being studied. Who knows—some day we may have insect repellents that mimic certain human body odors!



Watch the Mulch



That mulched area so many homes and businesses have around their foundation may look attractive, but it can also attract pests. Mulches hold in moisture, creating a place that many pests like termites, ants, and sowbugs love. Gravel is preferred because it is

less likely to harbor pests than a mulch of bark or other organic material. However, tests have shown that even a covering like pea gravel keeps the soil more moist underneath it, and termites and other pests prefer these moist areas.

Our recommendation is that dry, bare soil is preferable to any kind of mulch close to a foundation, but if you are going to apply mulch, make it a thin layer so the soil dries out more quickly underneath it, rather than the 3 to 4 inch deep layer most gardening books recommend. Also make sure that sprinklers are not continually wetting the area close to the foundation—let it dry out as much as possible.