

# Ants Information:

## Ant Habits:

Nests are normally permanent but new nest locations may be sought in adverse weather conditions.

Workers forage for food and mark their trails using pheromones and may be guided by landmarks, light or smell.

Some ant species specialise in their eating habits while others are scavengers.

There are approximately 3000 species of ants that nest in a variety of locations in Australia.

## Ants are considered pests because:

### Nuisance

Ants enter homes and cause considerable disruption and annoyance to the occupants

### Structural

The removal of small amounts of soil from concrete and brick paving will eventually cause subsiding and cracking.

### Damage

Ants remove planted seeds from the soil preventing germination.

Nests around the bases of small shrubs and trees result in undermining and may eventually topple them.

### Health

The conveyance of some diseases such as Dysentery, Small Pox and Salmonella has been recorded.

## Ant Control Methods:

### *Hygiene*

#### External

Avoid leaving pet food lying around, rinse bottles and cans to remove food sources

#### Internal

Remove food particles from cupboards and shelves and seal food containers

### *Nests*

Trail the ants to find their nesting areas.

Direct injection of the insecticide into the nest is the best and safest way to control the ant problem.

### *Bait*

Mixing Borax and honey may be applied in known ant areas but must be kept out of the way of children and pets.

### *Dusts*

Talc powder directly on the ants or down the ant nest may provide some control or contact your local Environmental Health Officer.

### *Physical Methods*

Washing tracks with soap will remove any scent and reduce re-infestation.

## **Ant Facts:**

Ants have four distinct growing stages, the egg, larva, pupa and the adult.

Biologists classify ants as a special group of wasps (Hymenoptera Formicidae). There are over 10,000 known species of ants.

Like all insects, ants have six legs. Each leg has three joints. The legs of the ant are very strong so they can run very quickly. If a man could run as fast for his size as an ant can, he could run as fast as a racehorse. Ants can lift 20 times their own body weight. An ant brain has about 250 000 brain cells. A human brain has 10,000 million so a colony of 40,000 ants has collectively the same size brain as a human.

The average life expectancy of an ant is 45-60 days. Ants use their antennae not only for touch, but also for their sense of smell. The head of the ant has a pair of large, strong jaws. The jaws open and shut sideways like a pair of scissors. Adult ants cannot chew and swallow solid food. Instead they swallow the juice which they squeeze from pieces of food. They throw away the dry part that is left over.

The ant has two eyes; each eye is made of many smaller eyes. They are called compound eyes. The abdomen of the ant contains two stomachs. One stomach holds the food for itself and second stomach is for food to be shared with other ants. Like all insects, the outside of their body is covered with a hard armour this is called the exoskeleton.

Each ant colony has at least one or more queens. The job of the queen is to lay eggs which the worker ants look after. Worker ants are sterile; they look for food, look after the young, and defend the nest from unwanted visitors.

Ants are clean and tidy insects. Some worker ants are given the job of taking the rubbish from the nest and putting it outside in a special rubbish dump! Each colony of ants has its own smell. In this way, intruders can be recognized immediately.