

Swindon Borough Council
Pest Control Service
Fact Sheet

Black Ants



Black Ants.

The common varieties of ants (*Lasius niger*) generally live outdoors in grass, walls or under paving, but can and do travel widely in search of food. They can be a problem in our homes and commercial premises, especially if the sweet sugary foods which they are so often attracted to, are left open to them. They are not dangerous, though they often become a nuisance. As with all insects, they may spread small numbers of germs around food areas, so special care with cleaning is important while they are present.

Ants live in groups and different types of ants are responsible for certain duties within the colony. The worker garden ants (sterile females about 3mm long) have the responsibility of building and extending the nest, looking after larvae and foraging for food. It is whilst they look for this food that they can be a nuisance to us. The queens (fertile females about 15mm long) usually remain in the nest. In early July, winged fertile male and female ants are produced and between July and September they swarm from the nest and mate in mid-air. After mating, the males perish but each fertilised female sheds her wings and digs a hole in the soil, where she will spend the winter. In late spring, this queen emerges and lays her eggs, which hatch in 3-4 weeks. The larvae are fed by the queen until fully grown when they pupate and eventually hatch and become the first brood of worker ants. The entire cycle takes about

2 months to complete. These workers then take over the food gathering and brood rearing duties. They usually feed on nectar from flowers, seeds, small dead insects and sugary secretions produced by greenfly. Under favourable conditions, a nest may persist for several years. If worker ants are causing a nuisance in the house it may be necessary to destroy them.

Preventing Ant Infestations.

Although sometimes Ant nests can't be prevented and appear at random they are less likely to invade your house if a good standard of cleanliness is maintained. Any sweet sugary items left around the kitchen/ house will attract ants.

Treating an Ant Infestation.

Swindon Borough Council Pest Control Team do not treat Ants. However Private Pest Control Companies will treat them. These can be found listed in the Yellow Pages. Ants can be treated using proprietary treatments available over the counter from supermarkets, garden centres and hardware shops. The following is advice on how to treat nests.

The first thing to be done is to find the nest or nests. Watch the ants as they enter and leave the house, preferably on a hot day when they are most active. They will tend to follow set trails back to the nest. If you have difficulty, put down some sweet food (eg jam) near some ants. Large numbers will then be attracted and can be traced back to their nest. Nests are usually outside the building in sandy soil, especially under paving or walls, within a few metres of the house. The only visible sign is often a scattering of very fine soil around the entrance hole. If the nest can be exposed then it can most easily be destroyed by pouring a large quantity (several kettles-full) of boiling water into it. If it is protected (eg under paving) or if you would damage plants by using boiling water, then insecticides can be used. Most garden centres, hardware stores and large chemists will stock a suitable range of products. Make sure the one you select is labelled for use against ants and follow the instructions carefully. Note that the powders are generally

better than aerosols for a prolonged effect. It is usually best to sprinkle a **thin** covering of the powder over the nest area and around the entrance hole.

Swindon Borough Council do not treat garden ants nests.

Please Note

Pharoahs Ants, Ghost Ants, Rogers Ants etc.



Some species of tropical ants occasionally infest our homes or work places. They can only survive indoors where it is permanently warm. These ants are much smaller than the common garden ants and usually pale brown in colour. Treatment of these infestations is different to that described here. Please contact us on the below number if you think they are a problem.

Call (01793) 466071