



BASILDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Common Black Ants

The common black ant (*Lasius Niger*) is a social insect living in a colony comprising workers (*sterile females*), fertile males and queens (*fertile females*); all living and working together as a community much the same as bees.

The nests are generally built out of doors in the ground, under pavements and in rockeries but they may build them in the foundations of buildings or in cavity walls. This ant will forage widely in search of food, which is usually how it comes to enter domestic premises and will cluster around food sources. Sweet foods particularly attract these ants. Clearly defined trails of foraging ants may often be seen.

Life Cycle

Between mid-July and mid-September, the fertile individuals will mate. This takes place on the wind and consequently during this time the ants will swarm from their nests as flying ants. Although this may be a nuisance, there is nothing that can be done about them. However, this stage is short-lived, lasting only two to three hours.

Following mating the males die but the females shed their wings and burrow into the soil where they live over the winter. The eggs are laid in the late spring and hatch three to four weeks later into larvae. They are fed by the queens until they pupae and form what has become known as "*ant eggs*". From these pupae, worker ants emerge. The fertile forms are produced in late summer. The complete life cycle takes 2 months to complete.

Treatment

The most effective control is to locate the nest by tracing ant trails back to nesting areas wherever possible. If the nest is accessible, dig it up and apply an insecticide dust, liquid or spray labelled for the control of crawling insects. If the nest cannot be found, a suitable insecticide solution may be applied around door and window frames, ventilation and waste pipes to make a barrier entry into the house.

Treatment is similar if a nest has been established indoors; however, care must be taken not to contaminate food or worktops with insecticides.

Ants may nest near heat sources such as heating boilers. All naked flames should be extinguished before applying powders or aerosols near these areas.

Sprays or lacquers should be applied in continuous bands around the points of entry, along skirting boards and the adjoining floor to a distance of six inches out from skirting. Not all floor finishes are suitable for treatment by lacquers and care should be taken to read the manufacturer's advice before treatment. Similarly, insecticidal powders may be sprinkled or dusted around points of entry and into cracks.

Suitable insecticides are available from most garden centres, department stores, chemists and hardware shops. All insecticides are poisonous to some degree and should be used with care and only in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, which are required by law to be shown on the label.

The common black ant does not transmit diseases or bite and is not considered to be a public health pest. Consequently, we do not offer treatment but if further advice on ants is required, please contact us on 01268 294280 or email ehs@basildon.gov.uk