Birmingham City Council

Regulation and Enforcement

Regulation and Enforcement – Pest Control Service

Ants Advice Leaflet – The Common Black Ant (or) Garden Ant

Ants are highly organised social insects. It is the foraging worker ant that invades buildings in search of food. Although Black Ants have a wide range of acceptable food sources, they are particularly attracted to sweet substances. If a foraging worker successfully identifies a food source, this is communicated back to co-workers, which inevitably results in vast numbers of ants invading the property and contaminating suitable human food sources. This advice sheet aims to provide you with information on the following:

1. General information about ants
2. What can be done to control and treat for ants.

1. General information

There are 41 different species of ant living in the UK. The most common ant to the UK is the Black (or) Garden Ant (Lasius Niger), which is typically between 3.5 to 5mm in size and dark brown to black in colour.

Ants typically nest in a variety of places, such as lawns, flowerbeds, under paving stones, and in walls. Normally, these places are of no significance to man. However, sandy soil and the sand used to form the base of paved garden paths or the foundations of houses does attract ants, therefore nests may well be found in these areas. Problems occur when foraging ants begin to invade houses. This is highly likely if the nest has been constructed beneath the floor of a house.

Normally during late summer, winged male and female ants will emerge from the nest. This normally occurs late afternoon, and causes a nuisance to local or passing residents.

2. What can be done to control and treat for ants

Control measures are generally only required when ants are penetrating and/or living in buildings or structures.

If you have ants, steps should be taken to seal all obvious entry points and faults in the structure/s. This should be supported by the use of residual insecticides to prevent further access.

You can treat against ant infestations yourself, in the home and the garden. Many “household” insecticide aerosols are cleared for use against crawling insects. However, their use is only likely to offer short term relief due to the low dosage of active ingredient involved. Boiling water poured on the nest will control any infestation for a short time. Alternatively, other powder and residual insecticides are also available from your local DIY store or garden centre.

To make sure you get rid of the problem, firstly you should locate the nest. This can be done by either looking for small piles of earth or by following foraging ants back to the nest. Once the nest has been

located dust the insect powder along ant runs and in any cracks or crevices. Entrances to nests should then be dusted liberally.

Directions on how to apply the insecticide are clearly indicated on the product label, and for your own safety and the safety of others the insecticide should only be applied in the manner detailed on the label.

REMEMBER: The Pest Control Section can offer advice on dealing with and preventing infestations of ants. Telephone 0121 303 6007 for more information or e-mail: publichealth@birmingham.gov.uk.