



Carpenter Ants in the Home

Are you seeing just a few ants but no trails or nests? Ants are likely out searching for food and/or moisture. Their nests are back in damaged wood, between wood shingles, in siding, in between walls, in cracks and crevices -places homeowners can't see. Homeowners can determine where nests might be by locating "frass," small piles of wood shavings/sawdust and dead colony members. Ants are very tidy and remove debris from their nest. These piles or "frass" are a good indication where nests are located because piles are near exit holes.

What to do about the few stray carpenter ants in the home? I did a web-search and was surprised to see the amount of bad information regarding carpenter ants, some information was even from reliable research-based sources!

Here is my recommendation:

1. The common sense: clean and remove trash, clean floors, counter spaces, and food containers regularly. Remove dead plant matter, decayed wood, old tree stumps, leaf piles from around the home. Clean gutters, prune trees and shrubs that touch the home or structure. Store firewood so that it is not touching the home or structure.
2. Repair any leaks, cracks or crevices inside and out the home, caulk around faucets and bathtubs, window panes and door jams.
3. Remove and replace any damaged or moist wood
4. Chemical options:
 - a. Insecticides labeled for use in wall voids of homes; these include: deltamethrin (DeltaDust®), cyfluthrin (Tempo® Dust), or carbaryl (Sevin®). These products should be applied directly to the nest
 - b. Injectable aerosol sprays applied directly to the nest
 - c. Baits such as: Advance Carpenter Ant Bait and Maxforce® Carpenter Ant Bait Gel can be applied outdoors along carpenter ant foraging trails and where ants are seen (they will take the bait back to the nest)
 - d. Insecticide premise sprays with active ingredients Bifenthrin and Zeta-Cypermethrin (Ortho Home Defense) sprayed inside the home around base boards, door jams, under cabinets and around faucets and pipes (do not spray directly on pipes or in sinks) and outside the home around door frames, windows and other openings such as vents and crawl spaces. Note: this product is effective on other insects and spiders*

If chemical control is deemed necessary, personally, I like using the insecticide premise spray around my home. For two reasons: I do not have to spend the time searching for the ant nests and it controls other insects of concern such as roaches. One downfall is this only treats insects on contact. The nests are still hidden somewhere and will continue to thrive. However, as a pet owner, I am more comfortable with this product knowing it is "safe when dried" according the label. I have also used baits behind large appliances and under cabinets and felt safe with those hidden applications.

I do not recommend: boric acid treatments in general- this product can be very harmful to humans and pets if ingested. It is also deleterious to some plants and soil. I certainly do not recommend mixing boric



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acid with sugar to attract ants. Ants' appetite changes, they don't always crave sweets, sometimes they crave protein. Personally, I do not recommend drilling or cutting out holes in your wall to place baits or dusts, unless the infestation is overtaking the home. My reasoning for this is if you do not own the home your landlord also may not approve and other insects or pests may utilize these holes in the future if not filled back in.

If you haven't already, be sure to follow Camp County Extension on Facebook @CampCoAgrilife

All data and recommendations are based on Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Resources. Product names and recommendations are not endorsements of products.

Sincerely,
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