



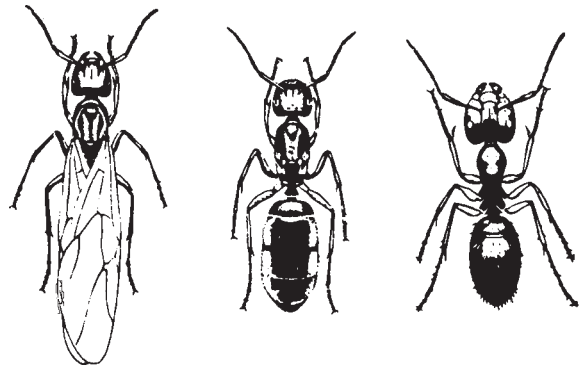
Urban Integrated Pest Management

Carpenter Ants

Insect
Fact
Sheet **1**

Introduction

Carpenter ants join termites as the most troublesome structural pests in New Hampshire. Two carpenter ant species live in the state, one entirely black, the other black with a rusty red midsection. Adults vary in length from 1/4 to 1/2 inch long for workers and 3/4 inch for the queens. Only the reproductive forms (kings and queens) have wings; they shed their wings before selecting a nesting site.



Winged carpenter ants are frequently confused with winged termites. Winged termites are found in early spring and can be easily distinguished from ants by the following comparisons:



Ant



Termite

Wings: *Hind wing shorter than fore wing*
Body: *Narrow waist*
Antennae: *Elbowed*

Wings equal in length
No waist
Straight, segments like beads

Life cycle and habits

A single winged female carpenter ant begins a colony by shedding her wings and selecting a desirable nesting site, generally moist wood that has weathered and begun to decay. In buildings this may be in porch columns, steps, corners of buildings, under eaves, between walls, in door and window frames, beams, and joists. Outdoor nests frequently are found in wood-piles, stumps, fence and telephone posts and rotten trees. Therefore, foraging ants found within a building may come from a nest established either within the building or from outdoors.

Carpenter ant workers do not eat wood as termites do, but excavate galleries to rear their young. This means they must dispose of the waste they excavate. Unlike termite galleries that are packed with a mud-like deposit, carpenter ant galleries are clean with smooth walls. Carpenter ants feed on other insects, aphid honeydew, plant juices, sweets, and scraps of food.

During the winter the nests are inactive, but individuals occasionally come out on warm days. Winged males and females emerge in the spring and summer. A new colony will increase in size and survive for several years.

Control

Preventive measures include eliminating stumps, storing firewood away from the house and off the ground, reducing humidity and *preventing structural wood from getting wet*. This may require repairing plumbing leaks, improving the ventilation in crawl spaces and making roof or structural repairs. Improving ventilation will be especially helpful in basements, attics and crawl spaces. Keeping trees and bushes from touching the house will reduce the chances of foraging ants coming indoors.

To control carpenter ants, it is essential to locate and apply the chemical control directly to the nest. The presence of "sawdust" indicates only the presence of carpenter ant activity; it does not prove you have found the nest.

Look in places most likely to harbor moist wood, such as porch floors and columns, eaves, sills, roof joints, and in the wood below leaking roof gutters. You can recognize the nest as the place where you find ant pupae and larvae. In some situations it may be possible to eliminate the nest by removing the wood it is in. When you disturb a nest, the ants quickly carry the white, oval pupae (often mistaken for eggs) and the white, worm-like larvae to safety.

By watching the activities of worker ants you can often discover their avenues of entrance into the walls or moldings. By feeling with your hand you can sometimes detect an increase in temperature in the wood where the nest is located. In the outdoors, inspect piles of wood, old stumps and trees with rotted wood. Branches hanging over and touching the roof of the house may be inviting outdoor ants to enter the building.

Bait cups for ants are widely available. Except in spring, it may be hard to get carpenter ants to consume baits, however. Gel and liquid bait forms are probably more effective than granules for carpenter ants; a sugary bait is best. *Bait cups are not an effective approach for serious carpenter ant infestations, however.*

Chemicals can be applied to baseboards, moldings, sills, and behind appliances to kill foraging ants. Perimeter sprays around the outside of foundations, windows and doors may kill foraging ants and help keep outdoor ants from migrating indoors.

Pesticides appropriate for carpenter ants will indicate so on their labels. Pressurized cans of insecticide, even if promoted as "ant controls," are not appropriate for carpenter ant control. Consult your county Extension Educator (see county office telephone listing on next page) for specific pesticide recommendations.

UNH Cooperative Extension County Office Telephone Numbers

Belknap

(603)527-5475

Carroll

(603)539-3331

Cheshire

(603)352-4550

Coos

(603)788-4961

Grafton

(603)787-6944

Hillsborough

Goffstown
(603)641-6060

Merrimack

(603)796-2151

Rockingham

Brentwood, NH 03833
(603)679-5616

Strafford

(603)749-4445

Sullivan

(603)863-9200

Stop! It is always the pesticide applicator's responsibility, by law, to read and follow all current label directions for the specific pesticide being used. If unsure of registration status of a particular pesticide product, contact the NH Division of Pesticide Control at (603) 271-3550. Store pesticides in their original containers in a locked cabinet or shed away from food. Dispose of unused pesticides or empty containers safely, according to NH regulations. If you suspect pesticide poisoning, call the New Hampshire Poison Control Center at 1-800-562-8236.



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