

## CARPENTER ANT



*Photo Credit: Tom Myers*

### DESCRIPTION

Carpenter Ant workers are large (1/8-1/2") but can vary in size. The queens are approximately 1/2-5/8" in size. Colours range between black to red to brown, some are both black and red. Carpenter Ants are single-node ants with an evenly rounded thorax. Development time (egg to adult) takes at least 60 days. There is only one, wingless queen per colony. Colonies can contain up to 3,000 workers when colony maturity is reached (in about 3 to 6 years). Swarmers (winged ants) are not produced until the colony is at least 2 years old, and consist of male and female reproductive ants, who will go out to form new, secondary colonies.

### HABITS

Most Carpenter Ants establish their first nests in water damaged or decaying wood and later expand into solid wood. Inside, nests are located in any wood areas (preferably softened by fungus rot), in insulation, and/or in wall voids. Outside, nests are typically located in rotting fence posts, stumps, firewood, dead portions of standing trees and under stones or fallen logs. The workers can forage up to 300 feet (91 meters) from the nest. Carpenter Ants may enter buildings around door and window frames, eaves and plumbing as well as via utility lines and tree branches that come in contact with the building. Some workers are active during the day, but most activity is from dusk until dawn.

### CONTROL

The first step of control is to determine if the ants are merely foraging inside for food or if there is a nest inside. The best indication of an indoor nest is sawdust (frass), wood piles containing insect body parts and/or a rustling sound in the walls. Gently tap all exposed wood such as floor joists, sill plates, roof rafters, etc. with a screwdriver and listen for sound changes; nest cavities give a hollow dull ring. Be sure to inspect crawl spaces, basements and attics. Carpenter Ants have trails they follow throughout a structure and often use electrical wires and pipes.

Once the nest has been located, residual sprays and dust can be used to treat the nest. Dust around all water pipes, under sinks, toilets, dishwashers, etc. and treat around base boards, window frames and door frames with an appropriately-labelled residual insecticide. Outside, be sure tree branches are not touching the building. Wood piles should be off the ground and stored



away from the building. Exterior sprays with a residual insecticide should be performed, treating around window frames, door frames, cracks in the foundation and where the soil and foundation meet.

Caulk around window and door frames and any gaps around electrical and water lines will help to prevent the ant from coming indoors. Inspect old railway ties around the building, as often they are the source of infestation, and treat the ties with a registered insecticide dust or residual spray.

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