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The Pest Bulletin

Carpenter Ants!

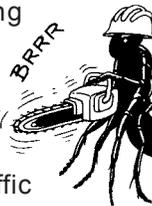
Here are some less well-known facts about this destructive pest.

- Carpenter ants can have very large colonies. A mature colony generally contains a minimum of 3,000 to 4,000 workers, and colonies of some species have up to 100,000 workers!

- Carpenter ants may travel great distances in search for food. We often find them as much as 100 feet or more from their nest, and there are records of these ants traveling 300 feet from their home. For a short-legged insect, that's a long commute!

- In order for carpenter ants to

move faster over these long distances between food sources and their nests, they build permanent trails "BRRR" by removing vegetation, soil particles, and twigs. As traffic increases, these trails eventually have a "beaten path" appearance.



- One fascinating aspect of carpenter ants is their habit of having "satellite" colonies. Large colonies have a parent colony, plus one or several more satellite colonies. The satellite colonies greatly extend the foraging area of the ants, because these

colonies have been found as much as 750 feet from the parent colony.

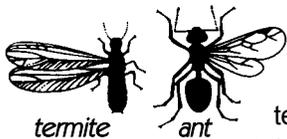
- Carpenter ants are most active at night, so whatever activity you see during the day is very small compared to what is going on after dark. Activity greatly increases as darkness falls, and generally peaks around midnight.

It requires a special expertise to control carpenter ants. We are the area experts at controlling this destructive ant, as well as other ant species.

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Thinking about planting next to your foundation, or laying down mulch? Consider instead a 2-3 foot wide gravel strip. Fewer insects live in gravel strips than mulches and planted areas, and gravel discourages some pests from crawling over it and entering a building.

It's Termite Swarming Time!



Within the next few months winged termites will start taking to the air to start new colonies. Hundreds of these "swarmers" can emerge from a single mature termite colony.

Not only are winged termites important because they can start new colonies, they also are a sign that one or more established termite colony is in the area. They are weak fliers and most stay within a several block area, but a breeze may blow them a mile or two away from where they emerged. A few of these may even find their way indoors, but if you see many inside they are probably coming from a colony that is already inside and eating away at your home.

We've included a picture here of

one side of both a termite and an ant swarmer, because ants often swarm about the same time, and it's easy to mistake the two. Note that unlike ants, termite front and rear wings are about the same length, the wings have lots of veins, their waist is broad, and their antennae are either straight or slightly curved, never bent.

Proper identification is important, because the control techniques we use are very different for termites, carpenter ants, and other ants. Call us for a professional inspection if you find any of these pests in or near your home. Save some of the pests for us in a jar for proper identification, but please don't fill the jar with water—it rots insects. Whatever the pest, we'll design the best control strategy to eliminate them.



Pests Find Pet Stores Irresistible!



Pet food is a common source of insect pests. Scientists surveyed eight retail pet stores in Kansas for insect pests during a seven month period, and collected an amazing **30 species** and over **41,000 insects**. The insects were most often concentrated near bulk food bins, in stockrooms, and on shelves holding wild bird seed and food for small animals.

When pet food is brought home, it should be considered a potential source of pests. These pests then infest and contaminate human and other pet foods if they can break into the packaging.

Always inspect pet food before you bring it home. Besides looking for beetles, moths, and small caterpillars, check for holes in bags or boxes where insects may be emerging, tears or gaps where moths and beetles could get through the packaging and infest the food, and webbing produced by caterpillars of moths.

Discovery!

New Rodent Found

A rodent never described by scientists was found for sale recently in an open-air food market in Laos. The discovery is extraordinary because it represents an entire new family of rodents, and for all we know, it could be the last remaining mammal family left to be discovered. The last previous mammal family discovered was over 30 years ago—the bumblebee bat, the smallest mammal on earth.

This new rodent has been called a *rock rat*, but it is an oddball that looks perhaps more like a cross between a squirrel and a porcupine than a rat. It is about 16 inches long from nose to tail, with stubby legs and a furry tail. It apparently feeds at night on plants and lives in limestone outcroppings in forests, but since scientists have still not found any alive, its habits remain largely mysterious.

These animals, along with rats, squirrels, and porcupines, are hunted and eaten by the local peoples.

Your Questions Answered

Q. Can cats transmit plague to humans?

A. There have been 23 human plague cases in this country since 1977 where infected cats were the carriers. Plague is caused by a bacterium that is usually transmitted by flea bites, but can also be transmitted in air-borne droplets when an infected cat or other animal, or human, coughs.

Cats can become infected with plague when they hunt infected rodents. Signs of an

infection in cats include high fever, swollen lymph nodes, or respiratory problems like sneezing or coughing. Any cat that shows these symptoms should be taken to a veterinarian.



Plague is usually curable in its early stages, but can be fatal if not treated. Most cases of plague occur in New Mexico, Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada and Oregon.

Wasps Being Trained as Bloodhounds



Tiny, non-stinging wasps may soon become important tools in the war against terrorism. Using sugar water as a reward, wasps can now be trained to detect an odor in as little as five minutes. Not only can they be used to sniff out explosives, poisons, and dead bodies, but they can even detect cancer by "sniffing" a person's breath.

The wasps are placed in a special hand-held chamber that is equipped with a tiny fan that sucks in air. If the wasps detect the odor they have been trained to find, they cluster around the vent opening. This creates pixels that show up on a tiny webcam, which in turn sends a signal to a laptop computer. Using different technology, scientists have already shown that honey bees can be trained and used to detect odors from land mines.

Did You Know?

⇒ **He should have known better!** In January, a homeowner in New Mexico caught a mouse inside his house, and not knowing what to do with it, threw it outside into a pile of burning leaves. The mouse's fur caught on fire, but then it ran back into the man's house, setting the house on fire. No one was hurt, but the home and everything in it was destroyed. The man related the entire sorry experience from his motel room.



⇒ **Back in the day...**As more bacteria are showing signs of resistance to modern antibiotics, physicians are turning back to fly maggots for help. Larvae of some species of flies eat decaying flesh, and since ancient times these "*medicinal maggots*" have been placed into leg ulcers, bedsores, and wounds to clean them out right down to sound flesh. This speeds healing that might not occur otherwise. Medicinal maggots are removed from the wound when their job is done.