

# PMP presents

## Direct to You: Ant Management

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### 'Tis the (Ant) Season

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Based on the various colors emerging from tree blooms, it appears we are well into spring. Although temperatures have been warm in the South for weeks, we still have some mild and cool temperatures in parts of the North. With this, insect populations will begin to rebound from the cold weather of winter and ants will be among the peskier of insect groups. Even though this time of year, populations are relatively small, they will grow rapidly as temperatures rise and foragers focus on gathering protein to bring back to developing larvae and increase the brood. And, in roughly two months' time, the populations will be in full force.

This is a great time to take some action to gain control of smaller ant populations before they become larger and more difficult to manage. Later in the year, technicians' time is more constrained. They may be pressed for time as they attempt to make every service stop, plus address lingering pest problems known as the dreaded "callback." So before the season is in full swing, now is the ideal time to take the extra effort to conduct a thorough inspection at every stop and identify any conducive conditions or early pest problems. And remember, ants love edges — so as you prioritize your time during inspections, focus on water sources, food sources and, of course, edges.

Examples of conducive conditions and other inspection sites:

#### **Ants Need Water:**

1. Leaky hose bibs/spigots on outside of house serve as a water source for ants.
2. Plumbing leaks under crawlspaces are great sources of water for ants.
3. Gutters are common places for both debris and moisture to build up, and many ant species will use this water source. They may even nest here.
4. Mulches are common everywhere around houses, and by definition retain moisture. A quick inspection of ideal spots may reveal nest sites.

### **Ants Need Food:**

1. All outdoor light areas should be inspected. Lighting attracts other pests at night, and often allows for insect bodies and parts to be available for ants the next morning.
2. Outdoor areas used for pet food are common hot spots.
3. Refuse containers and other trash collection areas are, too.
4. Don't forget residential garages. People store all kinds of things in the garage, and ants can find easy access to potential food sources here.
5. Food debris remaining in kitchen floor cracks/crevices and corners is a big red flag.

### **Ants Love Edges (and other entry points):**

1. Search for gaps in exterior coverings around the hose bib/spigot base, which ants will use for entry into home.
2. Windows that have damaged trim, seals or screens create an inviting entry point.
3. Doors that have damaged frames, trim or seals allow for ants to trail into the home.
4. Inspecting water meter boxes and other utility boxes this time of year can catch an ant nest prior to becoming a major pest problem.
5. Check the driveway/sidewalk edges and joints with the garage or house. This is a good way to track foraging ants in an attempt to locate a nest site.

What do you do when you find some ant foragers during your inspection? First, some attention should be given to any conducive conditions that exist and whether they can be remedied. After that, a control measure should be considered. This is a great time to use bait formulations. Given that populations are just starting out, this is a prime opportunity to impact the reproductive portion of these nascent populations. Baits are perfect for getting insecticide back to nest areas that are not able to be treated directly or are hidden.

Because it is spring, most ants will be looking for protein. A great option for treating these populations is the DuPont™ Advion® Ant Bait Arena. Although it contains several food components, protein and lipid feeding populations respond well to it. Advion Ant Arenas can be placed indoors or outdoors, and the plastic arena is certified as child-resistant packaging. Or, if you are looking to get bait into tight spaces or along some of those edges, DuPont Advion Ant Gel is a good choice. It is a very complex matrix designed to target more than just sweet feeders — and because it is a gel, it can be inserted into cracks and crevices where ants are trailing or foraging. Make sure to apply enough material, as ants will consume small spots quickly.

Also, for you pest management professionals (PMPs) in the South, there is no better time to treat for red imported fire ants than now. Although many mounds this time of year are small and hard to see in healthy lawns, a single broadcast application of DuPont Advion Fire Ant Bait will do the trick. Any mounds identified during inspection can be treated directly. Either way, expect to see dead mounds in 72 hours or less.

Whatever your approach to service protocols this spring, keep in mind what ants will be looking for. Let that aid in your inspection and treatment activities. Baits are good options, but make sure you first understand what species you are dealing with and what bait product matches with their behavior.

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