

E-NEWSLETTER

Those Darn Ants!



Okay, so we can all admit that at some point or another, we've dealt with accounts where we cannot seem to get a handle on an ant problem. Your customer keeps seeing ants in around a kitchen or bathroom sink, or other water source.

So let's run through what might be a typical scenario:

You look around and rule out the presence of a leak or other plumbing issue. You determine that the ants are just after whatever water is in the sink. You spend some time looking around, but because the ants haven't established a foraging trail, you can't figure out how they are getting in.

So you do what you can in this situation – perhaps you make a crack-and-crevice application into any obvious cracks or gaps in an effort to keep the ants out. You recommend that your customer seal up the couple of gaps you found with some caulk or other sealant. You go through your regular spiel about making sure that food is stored properly, garbage is taken out regularly, excess water is wiped up, etc. And you're done.

Until you get another call about ants from the same account! So, you go back, look around again – this time taking even a little more time to check for potential entry points. You know that for optimal results, you really need to find and treat the source

(i.e., the nest). So you go outside and look for a nearby ant nest but find nothing. You watch the ants closely, but never see where they are coming from or going to. So you make another, more thorough crack-and-crevice application into the gaps in the area. You treat a few extra openings that you somehow missed before. And you're done.

You wish! You get yet another call from the same customer complaining about ants in the same area. So, what can you do now? What is going on?

Well, I can tell you that I've had this exact same problem occur at my house – in my kitchen around the sink. And I tried everything that I wrote about above. I checked outside for a nearby nest but found nothing. Since I could find no nest, I realized that my best bet was trying to keep the ants out of my house. So I treated all the obvious gaps with a crack-and-crevice insecticidal spray. I sealed up whatever openings I could see. Yet, I kept getting ants around my kitchen sink. I watched the ants carefully to try and determine exactly where they were getting in. But I could find nothing, because while there were several ants around the sink, there was never a real distinct foraging trail.

I realized that in order to find the entry point(s), I needed a distinct foraging trail. So I placed a very small dab of apple jelly on an index card, placed it on the counter near the ants.... and waited. It didn't take long – maybe 20 minutes or so – for more ants to show up (see photo below).



Workers recruited to and feeding on apple jelly (Photo by Patty Alder, NCSU).

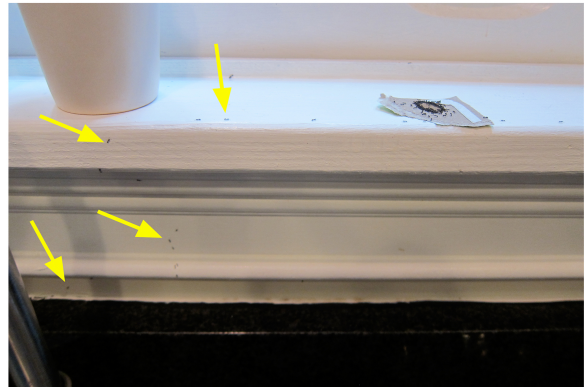
THOSE DARN ANTS, CONT.

Pretty soon, I had myself a pretty distinct trail of ants going from my kitchen sink to.... a small opening where the caulk had come out in an area on the counter right behind my sink. (see photos at right). A small opening that I had overlooked. So I treated that opening – the one that I actually saw the ants coming in and out of – with a crack-and-crevice spray and guess what? No more ants!

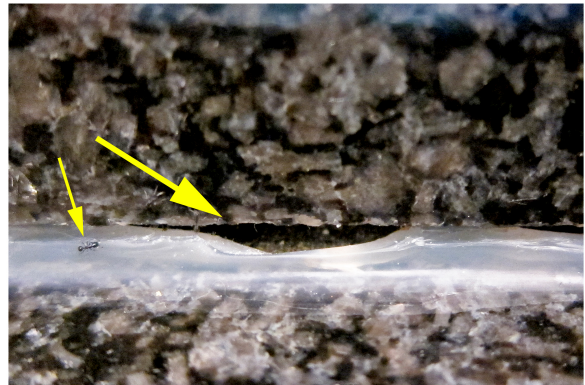
If you have this issue with ants, probably the last thing you want to do is spend even more time at this account! But if you've searched for a nest with no luck, then the next best thing you can do for your customer is try to keep the ants out of the house. So spend a little extra time and set out a bit of jelly on an index card in a couple of areas where you are seeing the ant activity. The extra time spent may save you a callback later. Or, if you've got a willing customer, ask him or her to set out the jelly about 30 minutes before you are scheduled to arrive.

Check for a trail of foraging ants and carefully follow the ants to see if you can determine how they are gaining entry into the area. If jelly does not seem to attract the ants, you could try a small piece of cheese or potato chip. Once you figure out where the ants are coming in, you can treat that opening with a crack-and-crevice application. You may even want to suggest your customer seal up the opening after it has been treated.

Good luck and happy ant hunting!



Foraging trail can be followed from the jelly down the window frame.



Ants were coming in through a gap in the counter below the window.

Upcoming Classes at NCSU Structural Pest Management Training Facility

June 5

License Specimen Review

July 12

License Specimen Review

August 7

Termite Troubleshooting Program

Visit our website at <http://entomology.ncsu.edu/training> for registration info and a list of all upcoming courses.

NEW PYRETHROID LABELING RELATING TO PRE-CONSTRUCTION TERMITICIDE APPLICATIONS

We discussed the recent pyrethroid label changes related to general pest control in the Winter 2012 E-newsletter. There are some new use directions relating to pre-construction termiticide applications that you should be aware of as well. The following are *mandatory* new use directions for termiticide applications made during pre-construction:

- The treatment site must be covered prior to a rain event in order to prevent run-off of the pesticide into non-target areas.

- The applicator must either cover the soil him/herself or provide written notification of the above requirement to the contractor on site and to the person commissioning the application (if different than the contractor). If notice is provided to the contractor or the person commissioning the application, then they are responsible under FIFRA to ensure that:*

1. if the concrete slab cannot be poured over the treated soil *within 24 hours of application*, the treated soil is covered with a waterproof covering (such as polyethylene sheeting), and
2. the treated soil is covered *if precipitation is predicted to occur before the concrete slab* is scheduled to be poured.

- Do not treat soil that is water-saturated or frozen.

- Do not treat when raining.

- Do not allow treatment to run-off from the target area.

- Do not apply within 10 feet of storm drains.

- Do not apply within 25 feet of aquatic habitats (such as, but not limited to, lakes; reservoirs; rivers; permanent streams; marshes or ponds; estuaries; and commercial fish ponds).

- Do not make on-grade applications when sustained wind speeds are above 10 mph (at application site) at nozzle end height.

Continued on following page....

Did You Know?

Adult ladybird beetles are able to “bleed” from their leg joints? The blood, called hemolymph, has a repulsive smell and contains various alkaloid toxins. The hemolymph is yellow in color and its repellency and toxicity are believed to be a defense mechanism against predators.

The last point means that anyone performing pre-construction termiticide treatments should have some method of determining wind speed. Mike Merchant with Texas A&M recently wrote a blog post that included three ways to accurately estimate wind speed:

- Purchase and use a digital wind meter, like the one shown in the photo at right. Today's units range in price from \$20 to \$200, depending on features. They can include barometric pressure, relative humidity, temperature, altitude, etc.
- Get a old-fashioned [Dwyer handheld windmeter](#) for about \$25. This tough and dependable unit (doesn't need batteries) works on air pressure to elevate a small plastic ball, providing a simple wind speed measurement.
- Go to an online website that provides windspeed data for your location, such as <http://www.intellicast.com/National/Wind/WINDcast.aspx>. The problem is that the wind speed at your local airport may not be the same as at the account where your applications are made.



Digital handheld wind meters are relatively inexpensive, and can feature powerful options such as wind direction, temperature, and relative humidity.