
THE PESTICIDE REVIEW

Volume 3, Issue 1

Santa Clara County Division of Agriculture

January 2004



Argentine Ants

The exotic invader.



Whether you are in agricultural or structural pest control, one of the pests everyone has to contend with is the Argentine ant. This pest will not only invade homes but can also create havoc in the garden.

Argentine ants, as their name implies, are from Argentina / South America and are an exotic pest to California. It is thought these ants hitched a ride to Louisiana back in 1891 on coffee shipments arriving from Brazil. It didn't take long for these ants to spread across the South and into California.

Researchers at U.C. San Diego found the Argentine ants in this State are genetically similar to one another. This genetic similarity is most likely due to the small population of ants that were first introduced to this country. U.C. researchers found if you pick an Argentine ant out of a colony in San Diego and drop it into a colony in Ukiah, they welcome the newcomer into the colony. Duplicating this same experiment in

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Argentina, however, researchers observed something completely different. When a researcher picked up an ant in one colony and walked over and dropped the ant into another colony 200 yards away, the ant was torn apart. Through DNA analysis, researchers found the ants in Argentina were genetically dissimilar and therefore regarded each other as enemies.

The fact that California essentially has one giant Argentine ant colony explains why this State has such a problem with these ants. In California, different Argentine ant colonies regard each other as relatives, not enemies. Coupled with the fact these ants reproduce quickly, sometimes having 8 queens per nest, and are very aggressive towards other insects, it's no wonder they've taken over.

Because of the endless supply of Argentine ants from neighboring areas, it is difficult to totally exclude them from a single property. The best you can do is employ a management strategy to control their numbers in areas where their presence is intolerable.

The first step to managing Argentine ants is to limit their access to food and water. You can do this by employing good sanitation practices, physically exclude them from an area, and chemical controls.

Structural Settings

The most obvious preventative measure to keep ants out of the home is good sanitation. Cleaning up spilled food, picking up leftover pet food, and placing food in airtight containers will deny the ants the food they are searching for. Sometimes that is easier said than done, and when the ants take advantage of an available food source, it is important to "train" the ants to go elsewhere to find their food.

Ants communicate with one another with pheromones, tastes, and smells. When an ant finds a food source, she will lay down a pheromone trail so

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the rest of the colony can help harvest the food. This is an important fact to keep in mind. When a company is called out to a residence with an ant problem, they will do the obvious steps of caulking and / or treating the area where the ants are entering the home, and trace the trail back, if possible, to the nest to destroy the rest of the colony. However, the pheromone trail leading to the house can still survive. Because of the endless supply of Argentine ants in California, it's just a matter of time until a new colony moves into the yard. Once this new colony starts searching the property, there is a high probability the new scouts will find their old relative's nest and "pheromone food trail" leading into the structure.

One of the ways companies can reduce the chance of ants invading a structure is to set up poison bait stations for the ants around the property. It is recommended that bait stations be placed around a property line or in areas away from a structure. The goal is to train the ants to lay down their pheromone "food" trail away from the home or desirable areas. Providing a variety of baits is also important. Argentine ants will seek out different kinds of foods at different times. Giving ants a variety of baits to choose from will enhance your "training program". These baits will help knock down the ant population and when new colonies arrive to the seemingly open territory, they will pick up where the old colony left off and continue harvesting the known food source.

Agricultural Settings

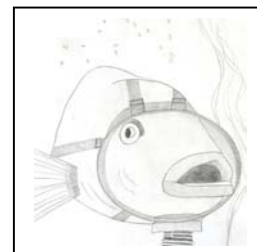
Because Argentine ants love sweets, certain garden pests can lead to a surge in an ant population. Garden insects such as whiteflies, scale, and aphids cannot digest the sugar they suck out of plants, so the sugars are excreted in a substance called honeydew. Argentine ants harvest and consume this sugary substance, which provides a rich food source for the colony. To compound matters for the garden, ants will protect their honeydew-producing insects from predators and parasitic wasps, causing the pest population to explode on the plant.

Controlling honeydew-producing insects with systemic insecticides is an option that will help keep beneficial insects in the area and help keep ant populations in check. If there is a pest problem on a fruit tree and systemics are not an option, dormant oil sprays and physical barriers can help. Another option is to place ant baits at the base of plants that have honeydew-producing insects. When you take steps to control ants,

you will minimize the chance of an ant army protecting plant pests.

We are sure many of you receive ant calls in the summer when ant populations have already grown out of control. Once ants invade a structure or start to harvest honeydew from garden pests, it becomes a battle to control the ants. In these circumstances, a chemical knock down of the ants may be in order. However, the sprays will only kill a portion of the colony. It is important to get those baits out and change the ants' foraging habits!

Fish Tanks and Structural Fumigation



Vikane label requirements

Large fish tanks can present a challenge to both a homeowner and a fumigation company. What do you do with large tanks with fish when you need to fumigate?

The answer to that question is the fish need to be removed. Even though water acts as a barrier to Vikane, the Vikane label requires all fish be removed from a structure prior to a fumigation.

If the homeowner is given enough notice about the requirements, they should be able to either transfer their fish into a friend's aquarium, or set up a smaller aquarium off-site for their fish.

Pesticide Safety Information Series Pamphlets

The PSIS series has been revised

Many pest control employers use the Pesticide Safety Information Series as an integral training tool to train their employees. We wanted to make you aware that DPR just revised this series making the pamphlets easier to read and understand. To obtain copies of the "N-series" for non-crop settings, access DPR's website at:

<http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/whs/psi2menu.htm>

DPR Licensing Fee Increase

All fees are increasing starting January 2004

The State budget crisis has forced DPR to reevaluate their cost for services. DPR had not increased their licensing fees for over 15 years, and consequently did not keep up with inflation or the cost of doing business. Because it has been 15 years since the last increase, there has been a large jump in fees. DPR stated the increase was raised only to a level necessary to support their licensing programs.

Individual Licenses and Certificate Fees:

The application fee for a license no longer includes the cost to take the exam. In addition to the application fee, there is now an additional \$50 fee for each examination. The application and renewal fees are listed down below for each license type.

Type of License	Application Fee	Examination Fee (for each exam taken)	2-year renewal
PCA	\$ 80	\$ 50	\$ 140
QAL	\$ 60	\$ 50	\$ 120
QAC	\$ 40	\$ 50	\$ 60
Designated Agent	\$ 25	\$ 50	\$ 50
Pilot	\$ 60	\$ 50	\$ 90

Fees for Business Licenses:

License Type	Application Fee	2-Year Renewal
Pest control business, primary location	\$ 160	\$ 320
Pest control business, branch location	\$ 80	\$ 160
Maintenance Gardener	\$ 80	\$ 160
Pesticide dealership	\$ 160	\$ 320
Pesticide dealership branch location	\$ 80	\$ 160

Other Fee Increases:

In addition to the application and examination fee increases, please be aware late renewal penalties also increased. (DPR stated these new fees and penalties would be listed in upcoming renewal forms.) DPR also added a \$20 fee for reissuing or duplicating licenses or certificates.

In order to obtain accreditation for a continuing education course, sponsors have to submit an application with an agenda for the meeting. This process was free, but now continuing education sponsors will be required to pay a \$45 dollar fee for DPR to review and approve seminars.

DPR's New Written Recommendation Policy

Non-Production Agricultural sites

DPR had a long-standing policy requiring a written recommendation from a licensed PCA for all pesticide applications at non-production agricultural sites. These sites included cemeteries, golf courses, parks, and right-of-ways. Surprisingly, DPR recently modified this long-standing policy.

DPR published a letter stating the following:

"Property owners/ operators and their employees are not required to be licensed by the Department of Pesticide Regulation as pest control advisors when making decisions in regard to pesticides to be used for agricultural use on the property of the owner/ operator."

Our office suggests property owners/ operators of non-production agricultural sites consult their legal counsel before changing current practices. Even though the new policy interpretation no longer requires a PCA written recommendation prior to applying pesticides on your property, it may be wise to keep your current recommendation policy to limit your legal liability.

It is also important to note this new policy will undoubtedly be challenged and could be reversed. Before allowing your PCA license to lapse, you may wish to wait and see what happens. We will watch for changes and will let you know of any new developments.