



City of Westminster

Pest Information

**FREE PHONE:
0800 3580514**

Tropical Ants



Pharaoh's ant

What do they look like?

Pharaoh's ants are small reddish/brown tropical insects typically 2mm long. Pharaoh's ants were first recorded in Britain in the early nineteenth century. They live in groups and different types of ants are responsible for certain duties within the colony. The worker ants (sterile females) have responsibility for building and extending the nest, looking after the larvae and foraging. It is when they look for food that they are a nuisance. The queens (fertile females) usually remain in the nest.

Where and how do they live?

Pharaoh's ants are commonly found indoors. They need warm temperatures to breed and are thus usually associated with warm, centrally heated buildings. They are increasingly found in domestic properties.

Why are they a problem?

Pharaoh's ants can carry germs from dirty places to clean food and for this reason are of major public health significance. The fact that they are difficult to control also poses problems – worker ants are able to start new nests if the original one becomes too small. A building may be infested with Pharaoh's ants that will not necessarily be located at one nest site. Additionally, the ants are spread quite easily from building to building in moveable items such as clothing and bedding.

How do they breed?

Pharaoh's ant's nests are centered around a queen. She lays a considerable number of eggs over a period of two years. During the development of the nest many more queens may be produced, and at times males may also appear. Unlike the garden ant, the queen Pharaoh's ant will be replaced by the workers when she gets older and incapable of maintaining the normal egg-laying rate. In two to four weeks the eggs hatch into tiny larvae (or grubs), which are fed by the sterile female workers. In a couple of weeks the larvae change into pupae – a resting phase. This resting stage lasts from two to four weeks before the young ants emerge.

What can you do to prevent pharaoh's ants in your home?

The sterile female ants become a nuisance when they search for food in our homes. They are able to communicate information regarding the location of suitable food sites to other workers, and it is common to see long narrow trails of worker ants moving to and from the food source. It is also common for the ants to search out water for drinking, and this often brings them into contact with drains. Ensuring food is stored in pest proof containers and keeping work surfaces clean will help to discourage Pharaoh's ants.

Other species of tropical ant may include:

Ghost Ants

Ghost ants have almost transparent legs and abdomen, with a dark brown head and thorax, Approx 1 to 2 mm in size, slightly smaller than pharaoh ants.



Argentine Ants

The worker ants are about 3 millimetres long and can easily squeeze through cracks and holes no more than 1 millimetre in size. Queens are two to four times the length of workers. These ants will set up quarters in the ground, in cracks in concrete walls, in spaces between boards and timbers, even among belongings in human dwellings.



Crazy Ants

Crazy ants are small (2-4mm), slender ants that appear to be all the same size. They are black or gray and sometimes have bluish reflections. These ants have very long legs and antennae. The name "crazy ant" is derived from their frantic movements and frequent changes in direction, especially when disturbed.



How can I get rid of Tropical Ants?

Call City of Westminster Council Pest Control Team **Free Phone 0800 3580514**.

Treatment

Fully trained and qualified council pest control officers will survey the premises; poison bait stations / gels will be placed in the most appropriate and safe locations. You will be issued a **Notice to Occupier** form detailing which poisons have been left in the property; keep this in a safe place for reference for emergency services should the need arise. You may also be given advice on house-keeping which may assist the treatment. Any follow up appointments will be arranged with you at the end of each visit.

Post Treatment

Most Tropical Ant treatments work by making the ants infertile which prevents the increase and spread of the colonies. As the treatment is an attractant you will see an increase in activity around the treated areas which is perfectly normal. Do not try to kill these ants yourself as this will prevent the treatment from reaching the nest and subsequent spread of the treatment to the remaining colonies. The increase in activity may occur for a short period after each treatment. Depending on the circumstances most Tropical Ant infestations take between three to six weeks to control (although some infestations can take up to 12 weeks).

Failing to report a Tropical infestation is not wise; Tropical Ants do not disappear of their own accord. If you believe you have a Tropical Ant infestation in your property, please contact City of Westminster Council Pest Control Team.