

The Carpenter Ant



Carpenter Ants range in size from 1/8" to 1/2". They are typically jet black in color. However, there are some variations of this. The most typical variation would be jet black on the head and abdomen, with a reddish or brownish thorax. They can be identified by the one "node" (one segment) they have that connects the abdomen to the thorax. They also have a circle of hairs around the abdomen that has a silvery-goldish sheen to it. Finally, they have a large head with an evenly rounded thorax when looked at from the side.

Contrary to popular belief, Carpenter Ants do not actually eat wood. They are actually more of a scavenger, feeding on honeydew left by aphids, other insects, sweets, and meat. Why they are so destructive is because they make it their home. Carpenter Ants prefer to start nests in areas of wood that may have had previous water damage. This makes it easier for the ants to burrow into the wood to make their nests because the wood is softer. They also may prefer areas with a moisture problem because it gives them a close water source.

One sign that you may have Carpenter Ants nesting in your home may be seeing some of these ants foraging in your home. If you are seeing a large number during the day, you can bet that you have a large colony close by. This is because Carpenter Ants actually do the majority of their feeding at night. Keep in mind that just because you have seen a few Carpenter Ants inside your home does not necessarily mean that they are nesting in your home. There may just happen to be a colony close by that is just finding their way into your home for food.

Carpenter Ants are very clean. They hollow out new galleries in wood insulation or similar materials, so another sign might be what appears to be sawdust around entrance and exit holes for the colony. In these areas you may also see body parts left from other insects they have fed on and some of their own dead. Finally, Carpenter Ants will produce winged "swarmers" when a colony is mature. These "swarmers" will break off and form a new colony somewhere else.

In order to get rid of a Carpenter Ant colony, you have to hit the colony where they live, killing the queen. Spraying can be ineffective without removal of the colony because the queen will just continue to produce more workers. Baiting can reduce populations, but in some instances, it can also be ineffective in complete removal of a colony because they feed on such a wide variety of foods.

To prevent from getting these destructive pests in your home, it is a good idea to trim back trees that may be touching your house. Also, if you have firewood around, don't store it close to the house or allow wood to soil contact. This is also good advice to lessen the possibility of termites feeding on your home.

If you suspect that you may have a Carpenter Ant problem give us a call so we can get rid of it before they do any more damage!