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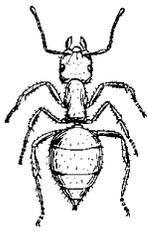
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SPRING 2020

The Pest Bulletin

Ants Are Invading



This is a great time of year to be an ant. Their food supplies are plentiful, colonies are growing rapidly in size, and winged ants are mating and starting more colonies. Unfortunately, all this means more home invasions of these common pests, as they come into our yards, and then into our homes.

It can seem like ants appear almost magically, as if from nowhere, but in fact their small size allows ant scouts to crawl through the tiniest of cracks to get indoors. And they don't often get lost! Once they have found food, moisture, or

a suitable nesting spot indoors, they lay down a chemical trail for other ants to follow. Soon hundreds or even thousands of foraging ants find the trail, and it quickly becomes an "ant super-highway."

Ants also very easily increase the number of ant colonies. They simply send out flying reproductive male and female ants, and these start new nests. For many species of ants that have multiple queens it is even easier than that to start a new colony—if a colony becomes crowded or stressed in any way, it will simply divide into two or more smaller colonies that start rapidly growing.

You should always diligently eliminate food and moisture that might attract ants. But our regular treatments are what really prevents and controls ant problems. We are the Area Ant Specialists—experts at controlling even difficult ant problems. Please tell other people about our friendly and effective services when they have problems with ants or other pests.

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

If you cut flowers and bring them indoors, check them first for insects, especially carpet beetles in the spring. Adult beetles feed on pollen, especially on white and cream-colored flowers, then fly off and lay their eggs on items their larvae eat, such as wool, silk, and leather. Rinse your flowers before bringing them indoors.

Termite Swarmers Are Coming!

Millions of winged termites will burst out of holes in the ground and in wood, and take to the air during the months ahead. The sole mission of these "swarmers" is to mate and establish more colonies.

Winged termites typically fly for only a few minutes, and they are weak fliers. Most will end up within a block or two of where they emerged, although a breeze can scatter them much further.

The termites soon break off their wings and begin looking for a suitable place to start a new colony. Although the vast majority of swarming termites are eaten by birds, lizards, spiders and ants, there are plenty that survive.

Those that make it through these dangers and find a nesting site become reproducing queens and kings of destructive new termite colonies.



The queen lays eggs slowly at first, but as the colony grows and her abdomen expands, her egg laying capacity greatly increases. She continues laying eggs for the rest of her life. Just three to five years after the new colony was started, it will begin sending out its own swarmers that will start even more new termite colonies.

Homeowners sometimes see the swarmers, or they may just see the discarded wings. If there are good numbers of them indoors, it is a sign that you have an established termite colony attacking the wood in your home.

Whether you see these inside or outside, don't ignore them—call us right away and arrange for a professional inspection. Early detection and control can prevent expensive damage to your home!



"Yes kids, our new home will have plenty to eat!"

## Bees Attack Firefighters and Police

In late February a swarm of 40,000 "very aggressive" bees in Pasadena, California, caused a busy city street to be



closed until the threat was over. A police officer who arrived on the scene to help and two firefighters were among five people sent to the hospital with multiple stings, and many other people were stung.

The six-foot long hive was discovered on the top floor of a local hotel. It was sprayed with a special foam to kill the bees and prevent anyone allergic to bee stings from being stung. Something had set off the bees—some noise, activity, or vibration. The hive was made up of Africanized honey bees, which attack more quickly and in greater numbers than other honey bees.

## Moose Tick News



You probably never thought that ticks can be a major problem for a huge animal like a moose, but they are. An average of 33,000 winter ticks, also called moose ticks, infest each moose, according to one study done in western Canada. Fortunately, this kind of tick only rarely attack humans!

The ticks get so bad that moose rub off their fur trying to rid themselves of the ticks. This exposes light patches of skin, and a term, *ghost moose* is used to describe this condition.

A recent study in New England also found the ticks were causing a 70% death rate among moose calves.

The ticks affect elk and caribou as well. Horses, deer, and cattle are also attacked by these ticks, but these animals apparently groom themselves more, reducing the severity of the problem.

Recently, a natural fungus was discovered that kills these ticks. A study is being conducted to see if the fungus can be spread in areas where the ticks are, killing them before they attack these majestic animals

## Viruses from Bats are More Deadly

The **Coronavirus**, also called COVID-19, from China apparently originated as a virus of bats. In fact, a new study released in February by the University of California, Berkeley, points out that a number of serious viral disease outbreaks in recent years, including **SARS**, **MERS**, and **Ebola**, all originated from bats.



Just why is that? The study found that bats have unusually strong immune systems, which causes bat viruses to have greater virulence. The viruses that survive bats wreak havoc when they cross over, usually through other animals, and infect humans and other animals that have tamer immune systems.

When bat cells are attacked by a virus, with amazing speed they release *interferon*. This molecule instantly signals other cells to wall themselves off from the virus. The only viruses that survive this quick response are the ones that become able to multiply so quickly within a host that the cells can't mount a defense. Let's hope that this and other research will help us to better understand and treat these viruses.

## Rat Eats Money



A rat slipped inside an ATM machine in northeastern India and started chewing and shredding the money inside, probably to create nesting material. By the time the rat was finished, it had chewed to shreds over \$19,000 in bills, or 1.3 million rupees.

The rat was found dead inside. It had apparently entered a small hole where cables come into the machine.

## Flies Carry More Diseases than Thought

DNA sequencing techniques were used to study the collection of microbes found on flies. *The house fly was found to harbor 351 types of bacteria, and the blowfly carried 316 types*, some of which were the same bacteria as on the house fly. This is a larger number of bacteria that flies carry than previously thought.

Many of the bacteria found cause infections in humans, including diarrhea, blood poisoning, pneumonia, and stomach ulcers.

The study found that the flies' legs were the most common means of bacterial transmission.

The legs had the highest diversity of microbes of any of the fly's body parts. Each step that a fly takes, as it wanders over a food surface, leaves behind a track of microbial colonies. (Flies have sensory cells on their feet, so they are able to taste food, to determine if they want to eat it, simply by walking on it.)

It makes a person think twice before eating food on a picnic that has flies landing on it!

