

PestManagement

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2014 STATE OF THE SEGMENT — ANT MANAGEMENT



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Ant Management through CSI's Combination Chemistry

By Marie Knox, CSI

Sound ant management takes great inspection techniques and an analysis of each situation, which includes identifying the species, determining which products will work best in each scenario and constant, clear communication with the customer. Setting expectations at the start will help you avoid callbacks and disappointments throughout the process.

SIMPLE IS KEY.

Identification techniques that are simple and easy enough to perform quickly in the field are often the ones that are most helpful and will remain in the forefront of people's minds. Three characteristics can help narrow down your species choices: relative size, color, and trailing behavior. It's important to be familiar with species active in the regions you service and how time of day (and even time of year) might affect what types of ants and what level of activity you might encounter.

Size and color characteristics are self-explanatory. You're working with either small-, medium- or large-sized ant species. It's pretty easy to compare ants based on size. Color is also helpful and relatively simple; a white-footed ant, for example, is very dark with white feet. And once you've seen one ghost ant, it's unlikely you'll mistake that color pattern anytime soon.

When making an identification or devising an effective treatment strategy, trailing and harborage traits are where the real fun begins. If the ant is primarily arboreal (prefers harborage in trees), you might find it trailing up a structure and near the eaves. This is where I suggest placing the product you've chosen for your treatment. (As always, read and follow the label, and choose a product labeled for the area you'd like to treat.)

On the other hand, if your species

is of the ground-nesting variety, you might find more ant activity near the foundation and entry points closer to the ground. Again, in this case I would suggest exploiting these traits when developing your treatment strategy. Let the ants' behavior help you in your control efforts and product placement.

IT'S GOOD TO HAVE OPTIONS.

The goal of the product development team at Control Solutions Inc. (CSI) is creating effective and innovative solutions driven by market and customer need. Two recent innovations from CSI include FUSE Termiticide/Insecticide and Tekko Pro Dual Insect Growth Regulator; both products are unique to CSI and were born from our Combination Chemistry development platform.

CSI offers a multitude of choices when it comes to ant control. Whether you prefer high- or low-volume liquid perimeter applications, interior or exterior applications, or granular product options, we have you covered. We've expanded our non-repellent options to include our newest product for termite and ant control: FUSE Termiticide/Insecticide. FUSE features two non-repellent, non-pyrethroid active ingredients: imidacloprid and fipronil. FUSE is labeled for ant and perimeter pest management, as well as termite control applications. FUSE offers flexible exterior perimeter pest application options, so whatever your ant management program looks like, FUSE fits.

Taurus SC is another proven solution for exterior perimeter pest and ant management. Featuring the active ingredient fipronil, Taurus SC can be used twice per year for exterior perimeter pest and ant control, is a water-based suspension concentrate of 9.1 percent fipronil and is also labeled for pre- and post-construction termite applications.

CSI offers a host of product options labeled for interior applications, including Optimate CS featuring gamma cyhalothrin. Optimate CS can be used for pest control in, on and around residential and commercial buildings, animal housing, and lawns and ornamentals.

At CSI, our driving mission is to develop synergistic, sustainable pest control formulations that improve the results — and the income potential — for PMPs who use them. Thank you for being part of our team!



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A LOOK INSIDE
THE BUSINESS
of
ANT
MANAGEMENT

By Will Nepper / Managing Editor

You can always count on ants. Other pest segments may ebb and flow, but the ubiquitous ant (in its various species incarnations) serves as an indestructible pillar holding up one corner of the industry. Pest management professionals (PMPs) continue to follow ant trails to significant rewards. If that description has an air of too-good-to-be-true about it, that's because, despite being a reliable moneymaker, the ant can be quite a pest — often the catalyst of the dreaded callback. However, when we surveyed the industry recently, we found many PMPs see a bright future for the business of ant management. Despite the control challenges ants can pose, there's no denying the financial opportunities they offer PMPs.





ANT-ENOMICS

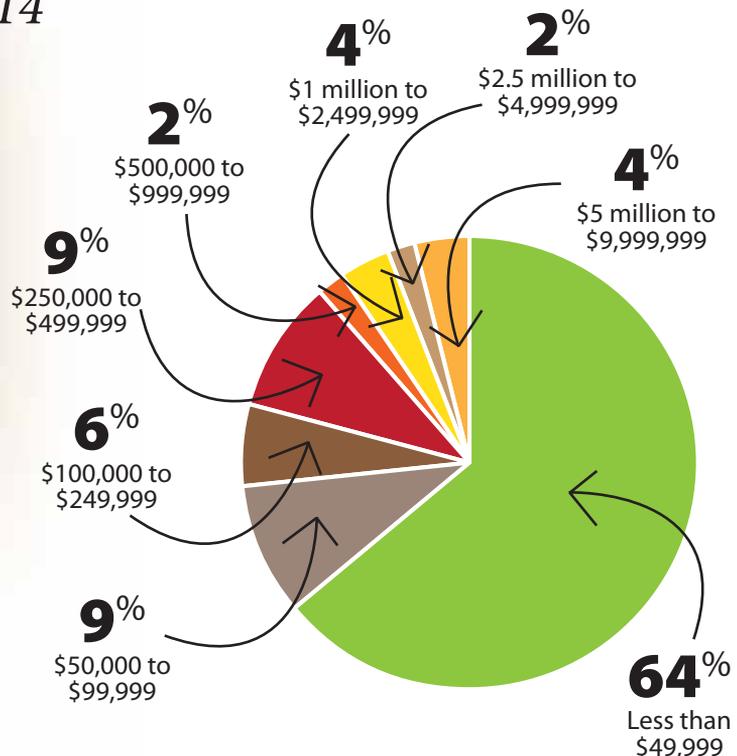
With regard to U.S. economics, the news is less urgent and the challenges less dire than they were two years ago. While far from ideal, the changes are positive, reflecting less of a bounce back than a slow roll back to where most of the country would prefer. In fact, most respondents (36%) to *Pest Management Professional's (PMP's)* 2014 Ant Management Survey say the economy looks like it's rebounding, citing that fact as 2015's top opportunity for growing ant management revenue. Despite that, one might be surprised to learn that a "sluggish overall economy" is the top obstacle in the same context for 49 percent of respondents. Other respondents report fierce pricing competition (37%) and difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified technicians (14%) qualify as their top ant management hurdles.

Twenty-two percent of PMPs we surveyed say their top catalyst for success and growth in the ant segment is their company's improved job pricing. But stats don't necessarily indicate this means

companies are raising prices. When asked to share their average initial ant inspection and treatment price, respondents were given a range of six choices, with \$99 or less at the low end of the spectrum and \$300 or more at the high end. A third price initial ant jobs under \$100. Meanwhile, only 8 percent of PMPs say they're pricing initial visits at \$250 or more. Renewal fees show a similar pattern, with the lowest-price answer being No. 1.

Second place on the list of reasons for ant-segment success and growth is fewer callbacks. Whether it's improved tools and technology or something larger (climate?) at play, one-fifth of those surveyed say decreasing ant-job callbacks is the top factor leading to significant improvements in ant management margins. What's more, they don't expect that to change next year. More than half (57%) expect callback rates to continue improving throughout 2015. The rest of respondents predict callback rates to be relatively unchanged. Not a single company surveyed expects callback scenarios to worsen next year.

*What was your 2014
ant management
revenue?*





It's likely all of these factors play a role in the industry's self-affirming look into the future. Most of *PMP's* surveyed readers expect big things for the ant management segment in 2015.

Nearly 33 percent expect their ant management revenue to grow by 25 percent or more next year. This is exceptionally significant when one considers that "25 percent or more" was the largest-margin option in a multiple-choice list of six potential answers.

Only about 8 percent expect their ant management revenue to remain flat from this year through next.

No one surveyed predicts an ant management revenue decline in 2015.

THIS CARPENTER BUILDS BUSINESS

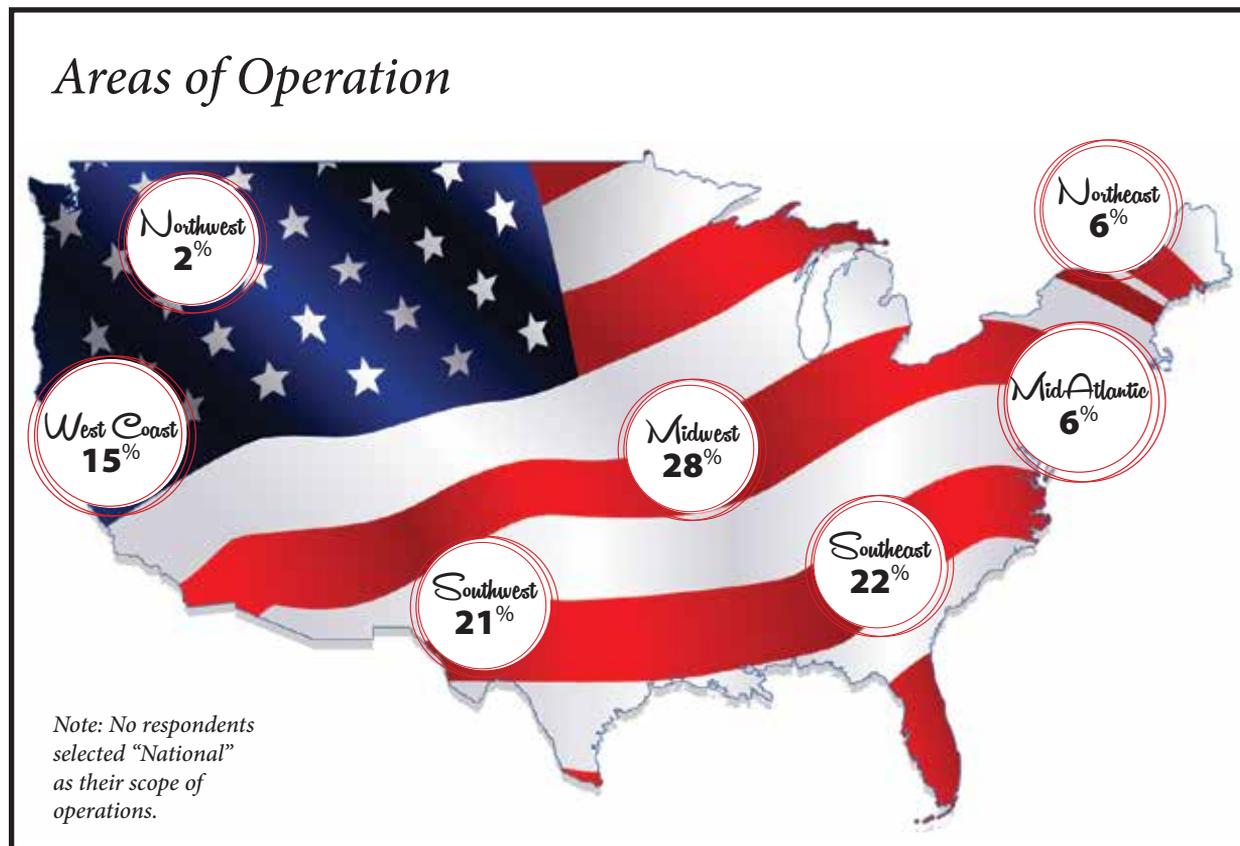
Sure, they're the enemy that you've pledged to wipe out, but it wouldn't be fair to deny credit where it's due. Without ants, there is no ant management revenue. So which species are doing the heavy lifting for the industry? It's the usual suspects.

Carpenter ants continue to lead the pack by just about every metric. According to our readers, carpenter ants are generating the most jobs, the most revenue and — unsurprisingly, for most PMPs who've dealt with them — the most callbacks.

Out of the 10 species listed in our survey (acrobat ants, Argentine ants, carpenter ants, crazy ants, fire ants, little black ants, odorous house ants, pavement ants, pharaoh ants and yellow large ants), carpenter ants most often ranked No. 1.

Interestingly, little black ants rank No. 2 in generating treatment jobs, but No. 5 in generating revenue, while being the No. 4 source of callbacks.

Because geography often influences these numbers, it's important to consider that most of the survey respondents' companies are based in the Midwest (28%), just ahead of the Southeast, Southwest and West Coast, in that order. (See the accompanying chart below.) **PMP**





TOP 5 ANT MANAGEMENT **DOs**

1. Perform thorough inspections. A thorough inspection, inside and out, helps you locate the trails and nests necessary to get the job done right. If you fail to do this, expect callbacks to clog your scheduling and chip away at your bottom line.

2. Maintain good communication with the customer. Good communication doesn't begin and end with a greeting at the front door and goodbye at the end of a treatment. Asking your customer questions is imperative to find out everything you can about each infestation. Sometimes a customer might offer information you didn't ask for, but you should listen anyway. Good investigators can often find clues to solve the mystery of an infestation in answers to questions they never asked. Likewise, if the customer has questions, fill in the blanks with the information they didn't ask about. Customer education is key in getting them to cooperate with your treatment methods. Finally, provide your customers with reasonable expectations from the get-go.

3. Identify the species of ant and determine the best treatment method. If you don't know what you're looking for, finding it will be challenging. Different species of ants require different battle

tactics and, often, different weaponry. If you provide the same inspection and treatment tactics for all ant accounts, you're setting yourself up for failure. PMPs' control technologies and techniques should take into account each ant infestation and account situation.

4. Make sure the price is right. Don't cheat your company by low-balling other companies or rushing to quote a job. Factor in all labor, materials, and transportation costs when quoting a price to a customer. Explain your ant management pricing structure. Let customers know exactly what they're paying for, and explain that sometimes a one-treatment strategy isn't always the one that succeeds long term.

5. Clear debris for proper treatment and inspection. "Debris," as it's referred to here, can mean anything from unintended food sources — overfull garbage bins, food crumbs and pet food — to furniture or other objects that get in your way when trying to do your job. Let customers know, before you arrive, what's required of them. Be clear communicating that where ants are concerned cleanliness is a key to solving their ant problem. — *W.N.*

TOP 5 ANT MANAGEMENT **DON'Ts**

1. Don't stop inspecting after you find one nest. The first ant nest you find might not be the only one there. If you halt investigations after locating one ant nest, chances are you're missing the big picture. And if you miss the big picture, chances are you'll be called back, losing money and wasting time you could be spending on other accounts.

2. Don't rush the job. It might be tempting for ant control technicians to cut corners to squeeze

as many jobs into a day as possible. But finding success in pest management isn't like running a race. Cutting corners never pays off and almost always means putting in extra time to make up for what you missed during your first rushed ant management visit.

3. Don't ignore the label. It's the cardinal rule of pest management and it's as relevant with ants as it is with any other pest. The label is the law. Taking a chance by being experimental with

Continued on page AM10

Lighting the FUSE

CSI's new termiticide/insecticide helps PMPs control a wide range of pests and offers a variety of treatment options.

The pest management world is constantly changing. Pests are constantly on the move and regulations often limit the tools pest management professionals (PMPs) can use. PMPs rely on new tools to combat customers' problems.

Control Solutions, Inc. (CSI) develops new insecticides, fungicides and herbicides for the professional pest management and turf care markets. FUSE is one of CSI's newest offerings combining two active ingredients: imidacloprid and fipronil, for termite and perimeter pest control applications. FUSE offers structural termite protection. FUSE is also labeled for conventional as well as exterior perimeter/interior spot treatment (EP/IST) applications for termites.

Both imidacloprid and fipronil act on the insects' nervous systems, but in different locations. Imidacloprid targets post-synaptic nicotinic acetylcholine receptors in insects, causing over-stimulation of the insects' nervous systems. While fipronil acts as a post-synaptic gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) inhibitor, also resulting in over-stimulation of the insects' nervous systems.

The technical explanation might not matter to most PMPs. What is important to know is that the product



Ants go marching

FUSE kills and provides residual control of pest ants including:

- ✓ Acrobat
- ✓ Argentine
- ✓ Big-Headed
- ✓ Caribbean Crazy
- ✓ Carpenter
- ✓ Crazy
- ✓ Odorous House
- ✓ Pavement
- ✓ Thief

Beyond the ant parade

Ants are the top pest concern of consumers, according to the Professional Pest Management Association's 2013 Pest Control Usage and Attitudes Survey, but there are plenty of other pests FUSE can control including:

- ✓ Asian Lady Beetles
- ✓ European Earwigs
- ✓ Boxelder Bugs
- ✓ House Crickets
- ✓ Cellar Spiders
- ✓ Millipedes
- ✓ Cluster Flies
- ✓ Pill Bugs
- ✓ Darkling Beetles
- ✓ Termites

provides control of a variety of insect pests including a variety of ants, termites and other pests.

An advantage of FUSE is the application flexibility it offers PMPs when making exterior perimeter pest treatments for ants and other occasional invaders. Whether an exterior perimeter pest control program is every other month, quarterly, tri-annually or otherwise, this flexibility allows PMPs the opportunity to fit FUSE applications to not only the needs of their customers' exterior perimeter pest problems, but to their own program treatment protocol needs as well.

With an innovative perimeter pest application chart featuring a choice of rate and a choice of spray swath, exterior perimeter pest management strategies can be customized to fit virtually any treatment schedule. Whatever your perimeter pest management application schedule might look like, FUSE Fits.

Fire Ants

will not come to your rescue.



Bifen I/T, Bifen XTS and Bifen L/P Granules

Bifen products from Control Solutions, control ants (including fire ants) and other perimeter pests. **Bifen I/T** contains 7.9% bifenthrin for use indoors and outdoors as well as on lawns and ornamentals. **Bifen XTS** contains 25.1% bifenthrin, has low odor and quick knock down. **Bifen L/P Granules** contain 0.2% bifenthrin on a high quality sand carrier for fast even distribution over turf. For the first responders you need to control Fire ants, choose Bifen products from CSI.

Contact your local distributor, CSI rep
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This product may not be registered in all states, please check the CSI website or the state's department of agriculture for registration information.



Continued from page AM7

your arsenal of products is illegal, unethical, environmentally irresponsible and dangerous. It also opens the door to legal issues, failed treatments and health hazards for both techs and customers.

4. Don't quote definitive price over the phone or make promises you can't keep. Some of the biggest mistakes in ant management begin with the first phone call. When you quote a job to a customer over the phone before you've actually completed an inspection and know what you're up against, you're flying blind and take a chance on cheating yourself out of money that was earned several times over. After all, customers can only tell you what *they* have seen. Likewise, don't end an initial exchange with a customer by promising results you might not be able deliver. When you fail to meet expectations, you've created a

disappointed, underpaying customer, likely to take their business elsewhere — and to share their dissatisfaction with several other people.

5. Don't stop communicating with your customer after providing treatment. Always follow up after every ant management job. When you do, listen to their concerns and gauge the effectiveness of your first efforts. Battling ants often requires multiple management techniques. If you don't check in with customers after doing a job, you risk alienating them by making them think your company does hit-and-run treatments. If you take too long to follow up, they may feel like you've turned your back on them and moved on to other sources of revenue — making them more likely to turn their back on you when you finally do follow up. By then, you might have lost their business. — *W.N.*

Ant Species Ranked by Number of Jobs in 2014	Ant Species Ranked by Total Revenue Generated in 2014
#1 Carpenter	#1 Carpenter
#2 Little Black	#2 Argentine
#3 Odorous House	#3 Acrobat
#4 Acrobat	#4 Odorous House
#5 Crazy	#5 Little Black
#6 Pavement	#6 Pavement
#7 Fire	#7 Fire
#8 Crazy	#8 Crazy
#9 Pharaoh	#9 Pharaoh
#10 Yellow Large (Citronella)	#10 Yellow Large (Citronella)

SURVEY SAYS!

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Soaking up knowledge from the triumphant and less-than-triumphant ant management jobs of other pest management professionals (PMPs) is one of the best ways to learn lessons. Wisdom springs from field experience and our readers bring plenty of that to the table.

COUNTERING CALLBACKS

One of the most cited obstacles in the business of ant management is callbacks. Surveyed PMPs share their experiences dealing with callbacks:

“Carpenter ants create the most callbacks, especially if they’re coming from large trees or nests off the customer’s property. We haven’t lost one, but when we run into a problematic customer, we provide free service calls until they regain confidence in our abilities.”

— **Chris Quinn, Operations Director, Catseye Pest Control, Castleton on Hudson, N.Y.**

“We’ve only lost one account to callbacks because we always detail our entire program before we begin, and communicate the status of the job at the end of every visit. We provide a continuing prognosis for this pest. What might work once usually will require adjustments. One customer

we lost called us back because their new company overpromised, under-delivered and communicated poorly. I personally take care of our accounts with service and follow-up. If I’m not on-site performing the service, I’m there overseeing the job.”

— **Ron McHan, Owner, BUGS McHan Pest & Termite, Flower Mound, Texas**

“We had an apartment community account with a severe ant problem. The treatment plan we devised was working well, and kept callbacks to a minimum. However, apartment management decided to switch to a cheaper company. We urged caution, but because we’d done such a good job managing the problem, they refused to accept it’s an ongoing battle. Soon about 75 percent of their residents reported ant issues. Management restarted our contract and within a few months, we reduced the number of callbacks significantly.”

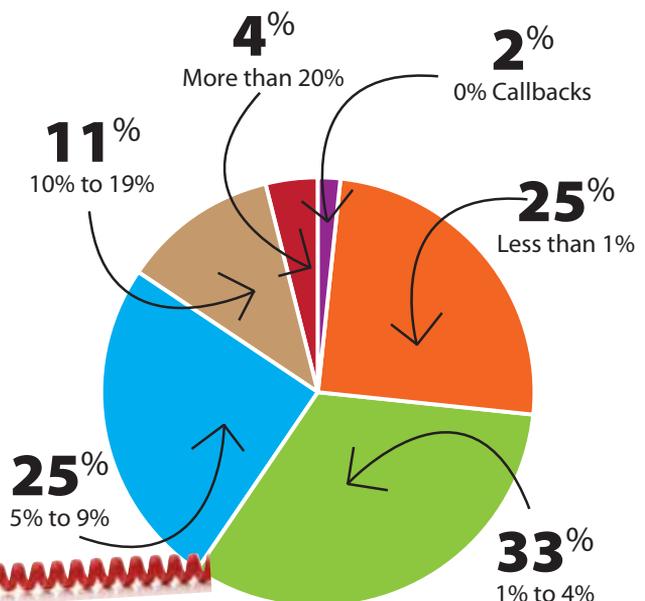
— **Danielle Phillips, Owner, NEW-TECHnology Pest Management, Summerville, S.C.**

Callbacks

Ant Species Ranked by Total Callbacks in 2014

- #1 Carpenter
- #2 Argentine
- #3 Odorous House
- #4 Little Black
- #5 Odorous House
- #6 Crazy
- #7 Pavement
- #8 Fire
- #9 Pharaoh
- #10 Yellow Large (Citronella)

Initial Ant Treatments: 2014 Callback Rates





LESSONS LEARNED

The open-ended questions in our survey gave readers the opportunity to relate some of the lessons they've learned from particularly troublesome ant management jobs. Here are just a few of the lessons PMP readers shared:

“We had a pharaoh ant job in a large suburban school building that was converted into a municipal health center. Previous PMPs had sprayed, and caused ants to bud all over the place. The keys to control were persistence and switching baits, as the ants’ dietary needs and preferences changed. I learned that pharaoh ants can turn on a dime with regard to food preference, and your best bet is to try multiple food options.”

— **Jay Bruesch, Technical Director, Plunkett’s Pest Control, Fridley, Minn.**

“One of the homes we treated had a persistent odorous house ant (OHA) problem. We unsuccessfully treated four times, leading my technician to place blame with the customer’s clutter and ample food debris. Eventually, we entered the crawlspace and all was revealed: We found OHA nesting in the hollow block support pier and trailing 15 ft. up to the kitchen. Jumping to conclusions about your customer can lead to misguided treatment.”

— **Doug Foster, President, Burt’s Termite & Pest Control, Columbus, Ind.**

“On my first carpenter ant job, nothing seemed to work. They were coming through a hole they’d made in the ceiling. I dusted, sprayed and baited in the attic for several months, but never found the nest. Finally, my manager and I spent two hours looking and finally found it, and solved the problem. The lesson I learned was: Take your time. You’re only treating a symptom of the problem if you can’t locate the source.”

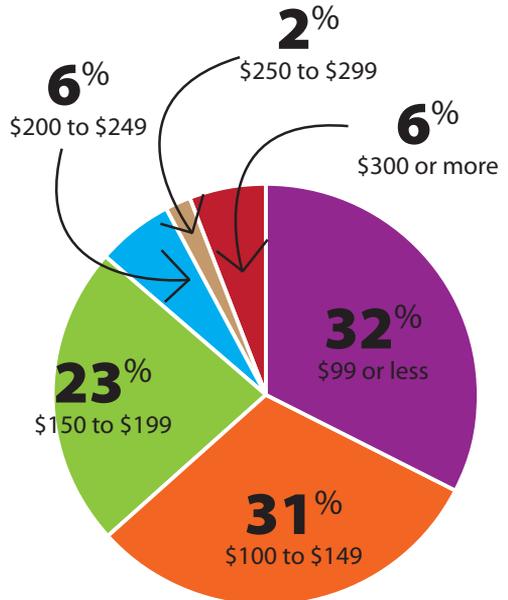
— **Alyssa Julien, Owner, N Texas Pest Control, Little Elm, Texas**

“One customer had carpenter ants infesting the home’s interior, but there was no sign of wood rot despite the dozens of ants inside. We ended up finding the ants traveling along the power lines from two houses down from the customer’s home. The lesson? Treating one location is futile if the ant nest exists in a neighbor’s yard.”

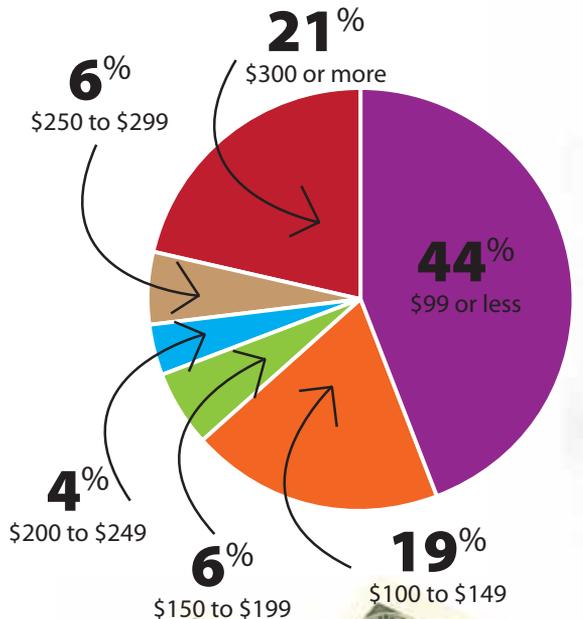
— **Danielle Phillips, Owner, NEW-TECHnology Pest Management, Summerville, S.C.**

Pricing Ant Jobs

Average Initial Ant Inspection & Treatment Price — 2014



Average Annual Ant Protection Renewal Fee — 2014





TRAILS

T O S U C C E S S

By Will Nepper / Managing Editor

No matter what part of the U.S. you work or live in, a dominant species of ant exists there, trailing across kitchen floors, finding its way into structures and generally creating a nuisance. Their nests aren't always easy to spot, and their points of entry aren't always obvious. Their numbers can be overwhelming — and as a catalyst for callbacks, they take the cake in much the same way their cartoon counterparts march away with picnic baskets. Their strengths include working together, driving property owners crazy, and challenging the pest management professionals (PMPs) tasked with taking them down.

In that regard, ants are a reliable source of revenue — ever-present and always requiring attention tailored to the offending species. And the fact that there are more than 12,400 ant species makes proper identification imperative. Different species have different modes of function, eating habits, behavior and weaknesses. It gets even more complicated than that because a species' food preferences can change with the seasons, which sometimes makes it difficult to concoct the right formulation of attractants of carbs, oils and proteins.

SPECIES & SPECIALITIES

The fire ant is the species most frequently dealt with by Josh Smith, general manager, Bill Clark Pest Control, in his part of the country (Beaumont, Texas). "It's currently generating the most revenue, but that's changed from last year when the tawny crazy ant was big business," Smith says.

But not too much further west, there's almost completely different insect pressure. "New Mexico has several ant species," says Jim Dye, owner, Border Pest Control, Demming, N.M. "We manage acrobat ants, carpenter ants, house ants, Argentine ants and many others."

"Odorous house ants (OHA) and carpenter ants are about all we deal with here," says Rusty Markland, COO of PestNow, Ashburn, Va. "OHA revenue increases every year, and has for the past 10 years."

Markland explains this is likely because the seasons in northern Virginia are especially conducive for OHA production and growth.

Without the ability to identify these species, most companies would become slaves to callbacks. Knowing what to look for and what species to expect in a particular part of the country, helps businesses like Collier Pest Control, Naples, Fla., remain proactive.

"We include most of Florida's ants in our general household services," explains Phil Hadley, owner of Collier. "But we exclude the big-headed ant, white-footed ant, carpenter ant, Caribbean crazy ant and the pharaoh ant, because we have effective specialty treatments for each of those species."



Hadley says it's imperative to develop these types of specialty services for the ant species that are the most difficult, and require the most attention, to control.

But if nailing down identification wasn't difficult enough, locating ant nests can take time and effort not necessarily rewarded during an initial visit. Tracking down the pests to a backyard tree in a customer's neighbor's yard, for example, could take a while. And even when you find it, there's no guarantee you've located the only source of the problem.

"As a young inspector, I learned that by the time a customer calls the office and requests ant service, in most cases that infestation is already at least three years old," Markland says. "The first year the customer dismisses the ants as 'just a few ants.' By the second year, they try to treat the problem themselves and ultimately fail. By the time your company is called, the problem is out of control."

In cases such as the ones Markland described, you're working for someone who's been observing the ants for a few years. In addition to being the best witness to the infestation and the behavior of the colony, property owners can help by eliminating conducive conditions and taking care of sanitation issues that might be making matters worse.

Mark Foltz, owner of BUGABUG Texas Pest Control in Rosenberg, Texas, says product efficacy and pricing have never been better.

"The ant control solutions we use work fantastic and allow us to pass on savings to customers, which keeps us competitive in the marketplace," Foltz adds.

OPERATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

The generally positive outlook of the pest management industry hinges on the opportunities laid out before it. While there were few complaints about 2014 from the field experts interviewed here, their premonitions for 2015 paint an even rosier picture.

"We expect an even better year ahead, as long as this winter isn't as bad as last year's," Smith adds.

But there are always unknown variables when predicting the future, and weather conditions are perhaps the most significant in the field of pest management — particularly where ants are concerned.



Carpenter Ant



Argentine Ant



Paul Salvant, owner of Bugman Pest Control, Baton Rouge, La., has found an unexpected opportunity in a surge of tawny crazy ant work.

“They’ve been unbelievable recently,” Salvant says. “Fire ants and carpenter ants still provide plenty of jobs all year, but suddenly during a three-month period during the summer, crazy ants were everywhere.”

Smith sees opportunity in this surge: “Even though the fire ant is still tops around here,

last year tawny crazy ants generated the most business of any ant species for our company. We’ve had to adjust our treatment protocols because of it.”

But opportunity and success usually don’t come without caveats. As Markland explains: “We expect 2015 to be even bigger than 2014. But it’s a double-edged sword: These ants offer constant business, but are challenging to control. To maintain your reputation, you have to solve the problem because callbacks will kill your name and profit.” **PMP**

EXPERT ADVICE

“After identifying an ant species, I bait first if possible, and only spray if all bait attempts fail. If I do spray, I always make sure I choose wisely — and I always let the customer know what I’m doing and why.”

— **Jim Dye, Border Pest Control**

“Set customer expectations during the sale. Let them know if theirs is a difficult ant to control, and how long it will take. Don’t promise something you can’t deliver. ‘No problem’ is a phrase you usually want to steer clear of using.”

— **Rusty Markland, PestNow**

“As a general approach to most ant-problem calls, we spot-bait the interior with gel baits or bait stations, depending on the circumstances. For the exterior we bait with liquid bait for ghost ants, but for most other species, we use either granular bait or power-spray the active area, depending on the type of ant situation we find.”

— **Phil Hadley, Collier Pest Control**

“Cost-effectiveness is very important when shopping for tools to do battle, so you can pass savings on to the customer. But the product has to work. Also, find a distributor or manufacturer willing to work jointly with you.”

— **Mark Foltz, BUGABUG**

“Make sure the customer sees the need to continue the service. Fighting some ant species can be an ongoing battle, and the customer should understand that from the beginning. Don’t oversell or take shortcuts.”

— **Josh Smith, Bill Clark Pest Control**

“We’ve had to adjust our ant management treatment protocols to combat an uprising by tawny crazy ants. They generated the most business for us, topping fire ants and carpenter ants, last year.”

— **Paul Salvant, Bugman Pest Control**

When the opposing team is termites,
let CSI be your **all-star defensive line.**



Defense! Defense! Defense!

Control Solutions is known for its large selection of products and effective solutions. Here are a few CSI products that will defend homes against destructive termites, all at a price that gives you the home field advantage. So huddle up with your favorite CSI distributor and make a play for the termiticide product that fits your game plan. Go team, go!

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