

THE INDUSTRY'S LEADING TECHNICAL JOURNAL SINCE 1933

# PMP Pest Management PROFESSIONAL

## ANT CONTROL

### 5 WAYS TO MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

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**ANTS**

A white plastic jug of FUSE Termiticide/Insecticide. The label features a large purple 'A' logo with a dotted border. Text on the label includes '3.0 FL OZ', '0.6', '0.3', 'FUSE® Termiticide/Insecticide', and a list of active ingredients: Fipronil (0.05%), Imidacloprid (0.05%), and Permethrin (0.05%). It also includes a warning to 'KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN CAUTION/ PRECAUTION' and contact information for Control Solutions Inc. in St. Louis, MO.

Acrobat, Argentine, Big-headed,  
Caribbean crazy, Carpenter, Crazy,  
Odorous, Pavement, & Theif.



 @csipest  @csi\_pest

[illegible]



# YOUR PARTNER IN ANT MANAGEMENT SUCCESS

BY DR. JANIS REED, BCE | Control Solutions Inc.

**A**s an entomologist, I am often asked what my favorite insect is. While in general, this is like asking a parent which child is their favorite, I must confess that ants top my list. The reasons for this are vast, but my primary reason for my love of all things myrmecology-related is the simple, childlike joy I can get from watching them work; they are truly fascinating creatures.

The strength of an ant colony comes not from an individual ant, but from the colony as a whole. The cooperative work of hundreds or thousands of individuals working toward a common goal is their secret to success. The variety in the ant world is also amazing. These tiny individuals range from only a few millimeters in size to as long as the first segment of my thumb; their colonies range in size from only a few dozen to supercolonies containing millions of workers. Because of this variety, ant management always has been a challenge to pest management professionals (PMPs). Ant identification continues to stump even experienced technicians.

## ANT CONTROL EVOLUTION

In the past, ant control was less of a surgical approach and more of an all-out assault, with high-volume, high-pressure applications made to the structure and the surrounding environment. It was hard not to miss!

Ant infestations are certainly still a major problem, but how we manage those infestations has changed. With modern products and restrictions, applications are much more precise and limited to certain areas of the structure, and sometimes the surrounding areas. PMPs have moved away from the large-scale,

“fire hose” approach for ant infestations. This shift means we must be more educated and knowledgeable about ant identification, where ants are living, what they are feeding on, and where they are accessing a structure.

As a beneficial side effect of this change in application technique, our industry as a whole has become more professional and viewed with more respect.

Here at Control Solutions Inc. (CSI), we strive every day to bring our industry innovative and differentiated products to help in the fight against pests, including ants. Modern PMPs have many products, techniques and limitations they work within for ant management, and these continue to change. Additionally, product selection, application techniques and customer expectations continue to evolve and change. We develop products for PMPs to aid in management of both the familiar and the new pest species. We work to provide PMPs with an ever-growing toolbox to employ during their daily battles in all pest situations, and especially ant infestations.

The CSI team is proud to be a part of, and to support, this industry. We look forward to partnering with PMPs to confront any challenge on the horizon, regardless of pest species. Our passion is support and providing these tools every day: CSI – innovation you can apply.



DR. REED is technical services manager for pest control operators for Control Solutions Inc. (CSI), a member of the ADAMA Group. She may be reached at [janis.reed@controlsolutionsinc.com](mailto:janis.reed@controlsolutionsinc.com).





# Great Expectations

5 steps that will put you on the path to successful ant control

By Diane Sofranec | PMP Senior Editor

**P**est management professionals (PMPs) can attract and retain customers by better managing expectations when it comes to ant control. You can ensure customer satisfaction at each step of the pest control process. Follow these five steps so customers will know what to expect.

## 1 Marketing.

Offering ant control services will help you build your company's revenue — and not only because the number of potential customers who struggle with this pest is seemingly limitless. Ant control provides recurring revenue, and will help boost revenue when offered as part of a service plan.

"Few ant species can be controlled with a one-time service," says Bery Pannkuk, ACE, director of sales for Rose Pest Solutions in Winnetka, Ill. "If you sell ant control as a one-time service, chances are your customer is going to feel ripped off when the ants re-invade."

Species with many queens and several colonies require ongoing service to successfully manage. Other species forage for hundreds of feet, invading from neighboring locations with no access for control. Return trips ensure satisfied customers.

And satisfied customers are more likely to market your services for you. With that in mind, train technicians to request referrals and positive reviews at every service call.

"Don't be shy," says Andy Nieves, franchise owner of BHB Pest Elimination NJ/PA, South River, N.J. "If you feel your customers are happy with the work you do, ask them to let anyone they know who might need pest control to contact you."



ANDY NIEVES

Be sure to mention you're adept at handling other pests as well. Explain which general pest control services you offer, as they may know someone who has bed bugs or cockroaches, but doesn't know where to turn for help.

"Whatever the problem is, your customers won't know how to refer you until you let them know what you do," Nieves says.



Traditional forms of marketing, such as direct mail, also are effective ways to attract more customers. But to retain them, make sure your message is clear and accurate. Manage customer expectations by making it clear you offer pest management, and not pest *elimination*.

## 2 Inspection.

As with any pest, a thorough inspection is critical to gain control. Ant colonies and nests may be located indoors or out, in trees or underground, inside walls or under pavement. Keep in mind, customers expect you to find the source of their ant infestation eventually.



**JOE SIRIO**

“Ant control requires an extreme amount of patience, but the rewards are profound,” says Joe Sirio, president of BugBusters of Long Island, Deer Park, N.Y. “If you take your time and thoroughly inspect, you will eventually locate the entry points that will require a targeted treatment for quick control.”

Customers can help you determine the extent of their ant problem, and provide a starting point for your inspection.

“Our customers spend more time on their properties than we do, so they observe the insects at various times of day,” says Desiree Straubinger, BCE, CP-FS, market technical director, Rentokil North America, Orlando, Fla. “A lot of times, we arrive to find no pests at that moment. But based on their input, we can figure out where the pests were coming from at that time and provide treatment and recommendations accordingly.”

Paying attention to what customers have to say will help ensure their satisfaction with you and your services. Doing so will show you care, and may even point you in the right direction as you begin your inspection.

“It’s easy to be a know-it-all and talk over customers, telling them what they need to solve their problem,” Nieves says. “Listening might unveil where their problem actually is coming from.”

Resist the urge to underestimate the value of the information customers provide.

“Indifference will not help solve an ant problem,” says Michael Caminos, owner of Caminos Pest Control in Cape May Court House, N.J. “If your customer isn’t helping by keeping tabs on where or when they are seeing ants, it may delay your

efforts to find the source of the infestation.”

While it’s important to learn all you can about the infestation from your customer, their input is no substitute for your tools, training and experience.

“A good PMP should never go to a customer’s home or business with a preconceived idea of how to treat a pest control issue,” says Randal Dawson, ACE, operations director, DC Scientific Pest Control, Tuscaloosa, Ala. “Inspect and identify always should be the first two steps of the process.”



**RANDAL DAWSON**

## 3 Identification.

Successful treatment depends on an accurate identification of the ant species. With more than 700 species of ants in the United States alone, it is critical PMPs know what they are dealing with. Customers expect the pros they hire know ants. Proving them right ensures they will be confident in your abilities to solve their problem.

“If all our technicians and sales reps know the biology of ants, and can identify the different species of ants, the customer obviously will trust the expert more,” Pannkuk says.

Training is essential, he adds, to be able to identify all the different ant species. While information and photos found on apps, through internet research and in manuals may be useful, Pannkuk says he believes demonstrations using insect collections are the most effective training tool.

“Hands-on is the only way,” he adds. “Nothing beats actually holding a pest in your hands.”

Contributing to the challenge of properly identifying ants is their small size, the vast number of species, and their various harborages.

“If you don’t correctly identify the type of ant you are trying to treat, the odds go way down on the likelihood of performing a successful service,” Dawson says.

He advises using a microscope to closely examine the ants you encounter at a service call, taking note of physical characteristics such as the color and number of segments in the antennae.



**BERY PANNKUK**

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Don't hesitate to share your findings with your customers. They expect you to know enough about ants to provide control, so offer your expertise.

"The specialist or manager spends time showing the insects to the customer and explaining the species and habits," Straubinger says. Rentokil also produces blogs and papers on major pests throughout the year to help educate customers, she notes.

At BugBusters, Sirio says his employees share with customers the biology and habits of the ant species that infest their homes.

"Educating customers who are willing to learn and cooperate is exciting for our company, as we are able to share our passionate knowledge while working together as a team, which is a huge bonus," he says.

It also helps manage customer expectations and prevent misunderstandings regarding treatment methods.

"Educating the customer on the biology of ants can help minimize callbacks," Caminos says. "If you don't explain how ants will react to an initial baiting service, for example,

you can expect a call from an angry customer who wants to know why they are seeing more ants around the areas you baited."



MICHAEL CAMINOS

## 4 Treatment.

Once you properly identify the ant species, you must determine an effective treatment method. Different species of ants require different types of treatment. The wrong treatment may make an ant infestation worse. Customers expect you to know what it takes to get an infestation under control.

But treatment isn't limited to a precise combination of products. An integrated pest management (IPM) program will enable you to determine whether sanitation issues must be corrected or exclusion work must be performed to ensure treatment is effective.

"Based on the type of ant involved, you can determine whether a spray, gel bait, granular or combination product is needed to treat the problem," Dawson says. "There is no one way to take care of all ants. You have to do your homework."

Act fast in the event of a callback. Your customers should expect nothing less.



DESIREE STRAUBINGER



"Being quick to return for a retreatment, and being knowledgeable and thorough, helps you stay relevant in your customer's life as a trusted 'problem solver' when it comes to pest issues," says Jake Claus, ACE, president of Natura Pest Control in Vancouver, Wash.

Besides, waiting too long may cause customers to take matters into their own hands. And you won't want that to happen.

"Facebook is great for keeping in touch with family and friends, but, as it turns out, is not a very reliable resource for finding out how to get rid of ants," Claus quips. "Once a customer has sprinkled cinnamon or sprayed Windex — we call this the 'My Big Fat Greek Wedding' treatment — you have no idea where the colony is, and your treatment methods lose their effectiveness."

Although well intentioned, your customer's actions made the problem worse and therefore "reflects poorly on you," he adds.

Straubinger agrees, saying customers may not want to wait and instead spray products that act as a repellent. "This can be especially harmful when dealing with ants, as it can cause the problem to multiply and spread quickly into other areas," she says.

When treating for ants, it helps to inform customers what they can expect after treatment.



**“There is no one way  
to take care of all ants.  
You have to do  
your homework.”**

– RANDAL DAWSON

Advise them they may see some dead insects, for example.

“Minimize the impact the ants could be having on the customer,” Caminos says. “If you serviced a food establishment, help reduce the incidents of ants visible to their customers. In most cases, it’s best if you take a proactive, rather than a reactive, approach.”

## 5 Customer Relations.

To ensure customers do not make an ant infestation worse than it already is, communicate clearly with them. Often, customer cooperation can be the key to effective ant control, so be sure they understand what is expected of them.

Ants predominantly initially infest a building’s interior for one of two things: food or water, says Straubinger. Customers who can help eliminate these conditions, and seal the cracks and crevices that allow entry, will ensure more effective control.

“It keeps the ants outside where they are easier to find and eliminate,” she adds. “We receive assistance with the sanitation and structural parts of pest control by building a partnership with the client.”

Getting customers involved in the ant management process also works for Caminos.

“Any time a customer can help remedy a situation, it will increase your chances of success,” he says. “Making sure landscaping isn’t touching the

side of the house or building, eliminating moisture situations in and around the home, and proper sanitation practices are important factors in helping us help our customers.”

In the past, Claus says, customers were given a letter at their initial service call that explained how they could help their technician solve ant problems at their homes, along with a helpful do’s and don’ts section. Since then, his company developed a layman-friendly script for office, sales and service staff to use, so they can help customers realize customer cooperation is needed to resolve issues with ants even before the visit. This phone call method also gives the customer the chance to ask questions and provide additional details the technician might need at the account.

“By explaining pheromone trails, disruption of colony activities, budding behaviors and so on, the customer has a better understanding of our treatment methods, and why using ‘over-the-counter’ or home remedies can virtually undo the treatments we’re applying,” he says.

After treatment, sometimes a follow-up call will lead to additional business.

“When following up with an existing customer, sometimes you may get lucky and meet their neighbor or someone else who may need a different type of service,” Nieves says.

“With so many options out there today for pest control, if customers aren’t satisfied with your service, they may not say anything, but instead just call someone else next year,” he says. “But if you follow up a couple of days after a service call, you may find they could use another spot treatment to knock out the last few surviving ants.”

Communicating to your customers what you are doing assures them you are providing the expertise and service they expected to receive. It builds confidence in your abilities to manage their ant problem.

“If customers don’t know what you’ve done, will they think you’ve done a good job?” Caminos asks. “Informing them what you’re going to do, as well as what you have done, confirms to your customer that you know what you’re doing. You’ve showed them the value of your service.” PMP

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JAKE CLAUS

## Ant control revenue weathers the storms

PMP's exclusive survey examines why ant management is big business **By Diane Sofranec** | PMP Senior Editor



**N**o matter where in the United States you offer pest control services, ants are good for business. Lately, they seem to be everywhere. “Everyone has them, and no one likes them. Except us. We love them,” Jake Claus, ACE, president of Natura Pest Control in Vancouver, Wash., says with a laugh. “Over the past few years, we definitely have seen a significant increase in ant activity.”

Pest Management Professional's (PMP's) exclusive 2019 Ant Management Survey shows how the species shake out. Generating the most jobs and callbacks are carpenter ants (*Camponotus* spp.), followed closely by odorous house ants (OHA, *Tapinoma sessile*), little black ants (*Monomorium minimum*) and pavement ants (*Tetramorium caespitum*).

### BAD WEATHER BOOSTS REVENUE

Ants account for 70 percent of Natura Pest Control's annual revenue. “It seems as though our city is built on one massive anthill,” Claus says. “With mild winters, wet and rainy springs, and warm summers, our area is the perfect breeding ground for major ant issues.”

The wet weather has helped boost revenue for many pest management professionals (PMPs), as customers tend to report increased activity when it's rainy. The amount of precipitation in the contiguous United States is more than 6 inches above average for the first time in 120 years, when records were first kept, according to the *Washington Post*.

The mild weather patterns have been ideal for OHA, Claus says. This species has been holding steady at No. 2 in PMP's 2018 and 2017 Ant Management Surveys. In 2016, however, it ranked No. 5.

Argentine ants (*Linepithema humile*) round out the Top 5 ants that generate the most jobs and callbacks for the PMPs who took this year's survey. The invasive species displaces native ants, as it is aggressive and territorial.

These invaders show no signs of stopping, according to the PMPs who took our survey. “If

climate changes continue, and temperatures and precipitation continue to climb, we will see more and more ant species invade our continent, especially down south and up north,” says Bery Pannkuk, ACE, director of sales, Rose Pest Solutions, Winnetka, Ill.

### OPPORTUNITIES ARISE

A proliferation of ants isn't the only reason for revenue growth. PMPs who answered our 2019 Ant Management Survey said when the economy appears to be on the rebound, ant management work picks up.

Fewer callbacks are another top opportunity, thanks to better profit margins, respondents said. Indeed, 53 percent expect their ant control callback rates to improve this year when compared with last year. Conducting a careful inspection, making an accurate species identification, using improved ant control products and adhering to a multi-faceted strategy help contribute to lower callback rates.

Offering customers a service plan for peace of mind also adds to the bottom line, as 17 percent of those asked said improved renewal conversion rates help ant management revenue grow. Andy Nieves, franchise owner of BHB Pest Elimination NJ/PA, South River, N.J., says his company added a Pest Protection Plan for residential and commercial customers, which has pushed year-to-date sales 5 percent higher.

“Our Pest Protection Plan covers ants as the star of crawling insects,” Nieves says. “It has increased our numbers this season, for sure.”

Of course, it helps that calls for ant work have risen over the past few years. “This year has been nuts with ants,” he says. “The weather definitely has increased the number of calls for ant control.”

PMPs who offer ant management services are reaping the rewards this year.

“If you are in the pest control industry, I can't think of a reason why you wouldn't offer ant control as one of your services,” Pannkuk says. PMP

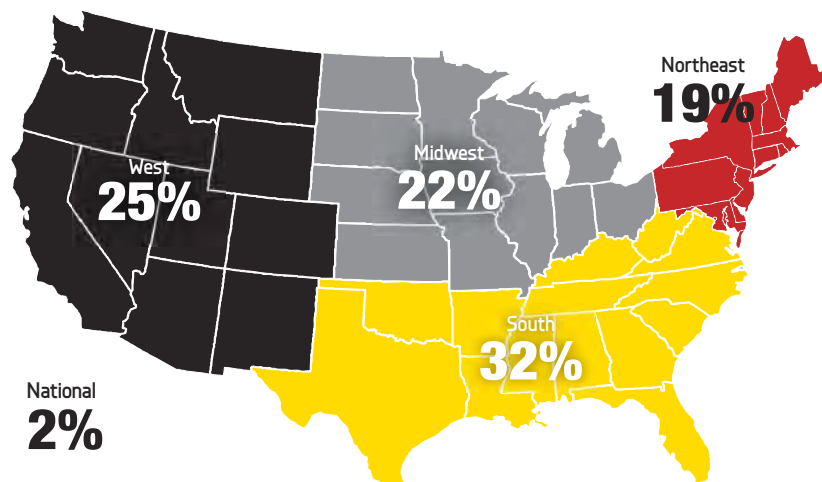
You can reach SOFRANEC at [dsofranec@northcoastmedia.net](mailto:dsofranec@northcoastmedia.net) or 216-706-3793.





SOURCE: PMP ONLINE SURVEY CONDUCTED JANUARY-MARCH 2019

## AREA OF OPERATIONS

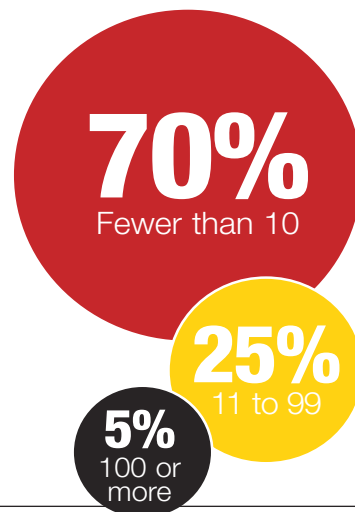

**WEST:** AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY

**MIDWEST:** OH, IN, IL, MI, WI, MN, MO, IA, ND, SD, NE, KS

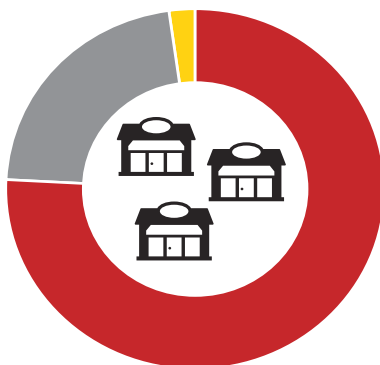
**SOUTH:** AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV

**NORTHEAST:** CT, DE, ME, MD, MA, NJ, NH, NY, PA, RI, VT, D.C.

## NUMBER OF TECHNICIANS



## NUMBER OF BRANCHES


 1 branch: **76%**

 2 to 99 branches: **22%**

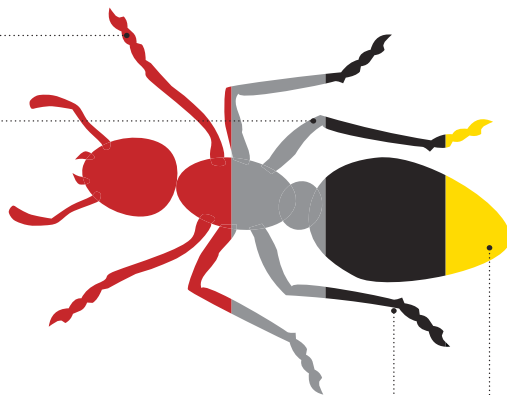
 100 or more branches: **2%**

## PROJECTED 2019 TOTAL REVENUE

 \$499,999 or less: **45%**

 \$500,000 to  
\$999,999: **18%**

 \$1 million to  
\$4,999,999: **23%**

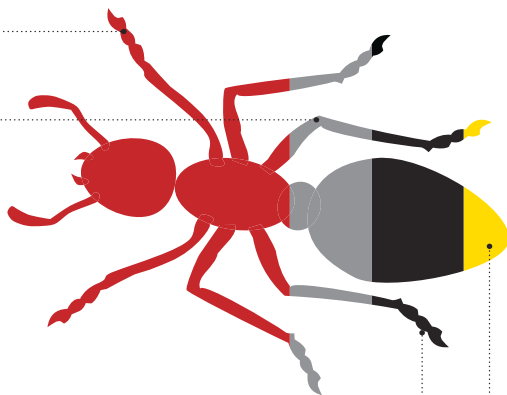
 \$5 million  
or more: **14%**


## PROJECTED 2019 ANT MANAGEMENT REVENUE

 \$49,999 or less: **56%**

 \$50,000 to  
\$99,999: **16%**

 \$100,000 to  
\$999,999: **18%**

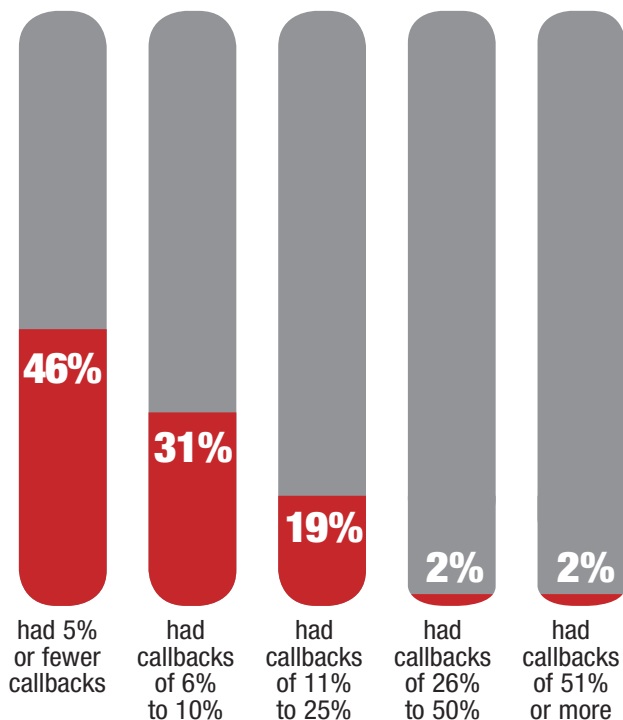
 \$1 million  
or more: **10%**


**ANTS** are the top profit-generating service — beating out services for termites and other wood-destroying insects, bed bugs, rodents and cockroaches — according to PMPs who took the *PMP 2019 State of the Industry* survey.



# 2019 ANT MANAGEMENT SURVEY

## CALLBACK PERCENTAGE ON NEW ANT TREATMENTS IN 2018



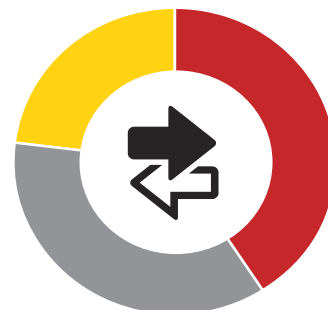
## PROJECTED 2019 CALLBACK RATE COMPARED WITH 2018

**53%** expect improvement  
**46%** expect to remain flat  
**1%** expect to worsen

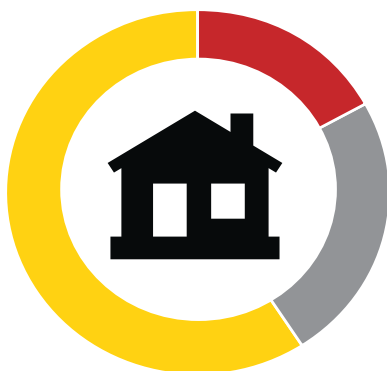


## TOP OBSTACLES TO GROWING ANT MANAGEMENT REVENUE

**41%** Fierce pricing competition  
**36%** Lack of qualified technicians  
**23%** Sluggish economy

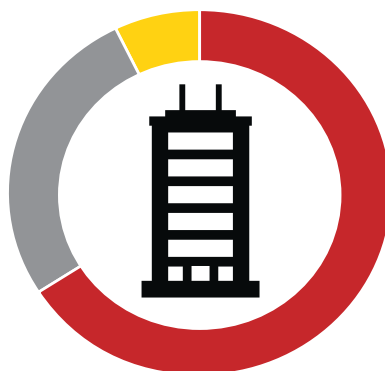


## ANT MANAGEMENT REVENUE BY STRUCTURE TYPE



### RESIDENTIAL

25% or less of ant management revenue: **17%**  
 26% to 50% of ant management revenue: **24%**  
 51% or more of ant management revenue: **59%**



### COMMERCIAL

25% or less of ant management revenue: **66%**  
 26% to 50% of ant management revenue: **27%**  
 51% or more of ant management revenue: **7%**



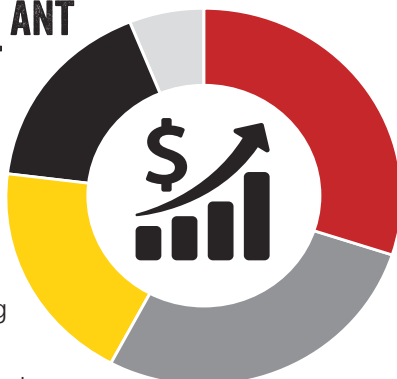
### GOVERNMENT/MUNICIPAL

25% or less of ant management revenue: **93%**  
 26% to 50% of ant management revenue: **5%**  
 51% or more of ant management revenue: **2%**





## TOP OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWING ANT MANAGEMENT REVENUE



**30%** Rebounding economy

**28%** Fewer callbacks, which improves margins

**19%** Better job pricing

**17%** Improved renewal conversion rates

**6%** Lower material costs

## PROJECTED 2019 ANT MANAGEMENT REVENUE FROM LIQUID TREATMENTS

25% or less of ant management revenue **28%**

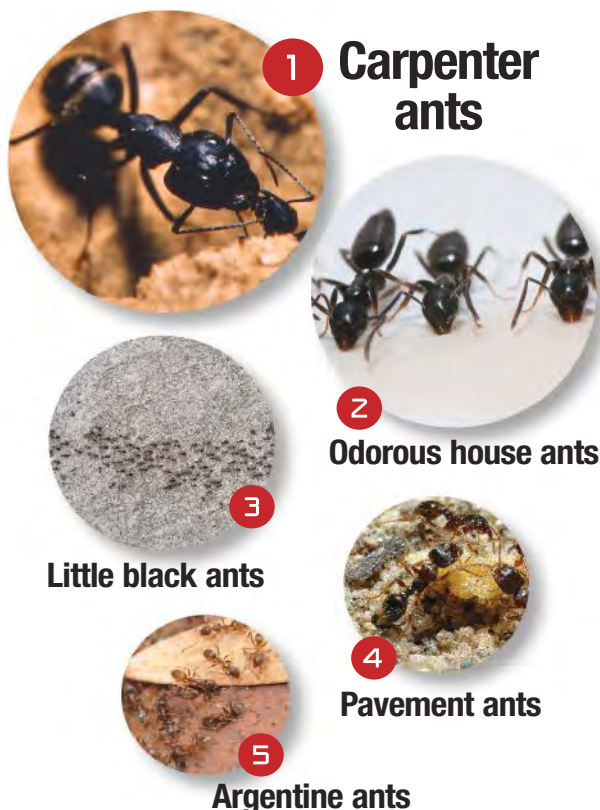
26% to 50% of ant management revenue **20%**

51% to 75% of ant management revenue **17%**

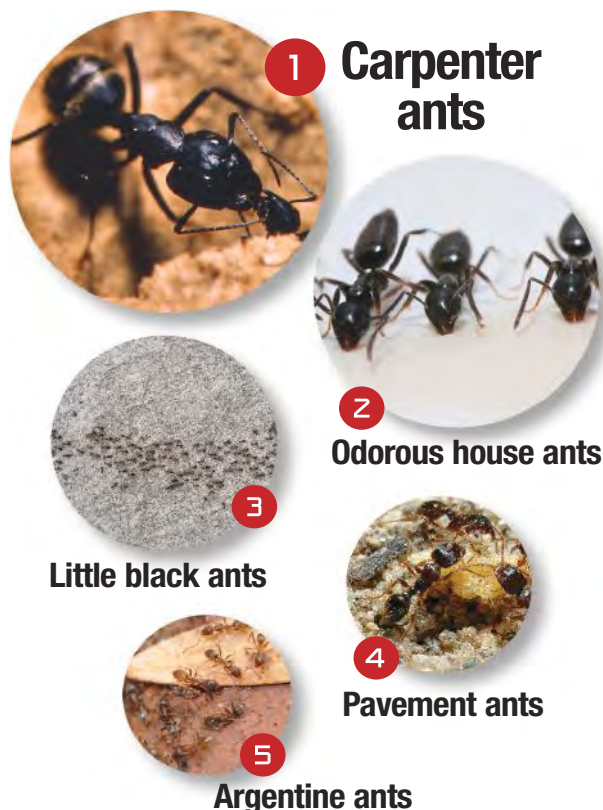
76% to 90% of ant management revenue **19%**

91% to 100% of ant management revenue **16%**

## TOP 5 PEST ANTS BY NUMBER OF JOBS GENERATED



## TOP 5 PEST ANTS BY NUMBER OF CALLBACKS GENERATED





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