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PMP Pest Management PROFESSIONAL

GOOD TIMING

Ant control requires
patience and knowledge,
PMP's exclusive survey shows

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To repel or not to repel ants? Sometimes, you need to do both

By Dr. Janis Reed, BCE | Control Solutions Inc.

Ants are a constant source of both revenue and headaches for pest management professionals (PMPs). They cause the phone to ring and bring us new clients, but they also are a common cause for callbacks and re-treatments.

While repellent insecticides have been a longtime industry mainstay, the use of non-repellent insecticides has increased in recent years, specifically for ant management around structures. Today's PMPs have many non-repellent active ingredient choices for indoor and outdoor pest management available in many forms, including aerosols, baits, dry flowable baits, adulticides and insect growth regulators (IGRs).

The choice of which type of active ingredient, repellent or non-repellent, is important for ant management. But it also is complex. Product use is situational, because no two ant jobs are alike.

Non-repellent insecticides (including baits, for the purpose of this discussion) are effective because insect pests behave normally when they cross a treated area.

Baits are foraged as if they are organically available food. Insects pick up a lethal dose of insecticide, and the slow-acting non-repellent ingredients can spread throughout the members

of the colony, causing a dramatic reduction in the number of workers.

Repellents, on the other hand, simply bring normal ant activity to a halt. Most kill on contact, thus disrupting normal foraging behavior. Repellents can also be used to change foraging patterns to disturb regular movement, potentially moving the ants to an insecticide bait or other treated area. In essence, you're pushing ants away from where you don't want them, and toward where you do.

When using insecticides, be sure to think about where your repellents and non-repellents can work best for you. Perhaps, during heavy ant seasons, choose non-repellent products only and save the repellents for another service. To gain control over an account where ants are widely distributed, or where you're perhaps not certain you know of all the entry points, for example, using repellents and non-repellent products strategically and in tandem is the way to go.

PMPs have many products, techniques and limitations they work within, and these continue to evolve. Additionally, product selection, application techniques and customer expectations continue to evolve and change. Every day, the CSI team works to provide PMPs with an ever-growing toolbox to employ during their daily battles in all pest situations, especially ant infestations.

We at CSI are 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 supporting PMPs, and by providing useful tools — well, CSI continues to supply *innovation you can apply.*



DR. REED is Technical Services Manager, Product Development Team, for Control Solutions Inc. (CSI)



Repellents (such as Proflex) and non-repellents (such as Fuse) don't have to be an either/or choice at an account. While in most cases, one or the other alone can lead to complete control, at more complex accounts, strategically using both products is the answer.



Carpenter ants' destructive behavior calls for control.



GOOD TIMING

Ant control requires patience and knowledge

By Diane Sofranec | PMP Senior Editor

Ant management requires time: Time to find the colony. Time to identify the species. Time to determine the correct control method.

“With ants, taking the time to inspect enables the technician to identify the species, determine the scope of the issue, correct any contributing conducive conditions, and ultimately, assist in developing the correct treatment protocol,” says Andy Shrawder, owner of Hershey Termite and Pest Control in Hershey, Pa.

Although it can be a challenge to convince homeowners that gaining control may not happen overnight, it's not the largest obstacle that pest management professionals (PMPs) face, he says.

“Homeowner cooperation with sanitation and the use of retail products is the biggest challenge,” Shrawder asserts.

He uses his customers'

frustration with retail products to his advantage, however, by turning ant control services into a springboard for gaining their trust and expanding into ongoing general pest control services.

He's not the only one who leverages the ant control services he offers. PMPs who answered *Pest Management Professional's* (PMP's) 2021 Ant Management Survey ranked improved renewal conversion rates as the No. 2 opportunity for growing ant management revenue. This answer moved up two spots from last year's survey.

EXPECT TO INSPECT

“Time is money, and customers who don't want to invest their own time fighting ant problems means you can win new clients,” says Macy Ruiz, BCE, technical services manager, Rentokil, Reading, Pa. But handing

the reins to a pro means the pressure is on: “People do not want to see any insects anywhere on their properties.”

To illustrate his point, Ruiz shares a trivia question with an answer that should be obvious to PMPs everywhere: How many ants does a customer need to see to call the office to complain? One.

With ants, inspection is imperative because of the vast number of species in the U.S. alone.

Indeed, the most essential step in ant control is inspection, according to Tom Sieminski, who says ants are the No. 1 pest for his company, Team Pest Control in Sayville, N.Y. “Control strategies are different for each species, so without the right species ID, we can't gain adequate control,” says Sieminski. “Ants are very good for business. We get more annual residential customers from ants than from any other pest.”

After all, ants don't hide from customers, says Ruiz. “They will tell you where they are if you are observant.”

The inspection for ants has to begin outside, he adds. If it's winter, then the inspection changes only to the areas where high moisture conditions and temperature, as well as food, are favorable for ants.

“Every ant is different, and responds differently to baits or pesticides, outside and inside,” Ruiz says. “When finding ants, it is important to identify them to develop a plan to eradicate them.”

ANTS ARE EVERYWHERE

More than 12,000 species of ants are known to exist in the world, **AntARK.net** reports. In the U.S., common species include Argentine, big-headed, carpenter, ghost, little black, odorous house, pavement, pharaoh, red imported fire, rover and white-footed ants.

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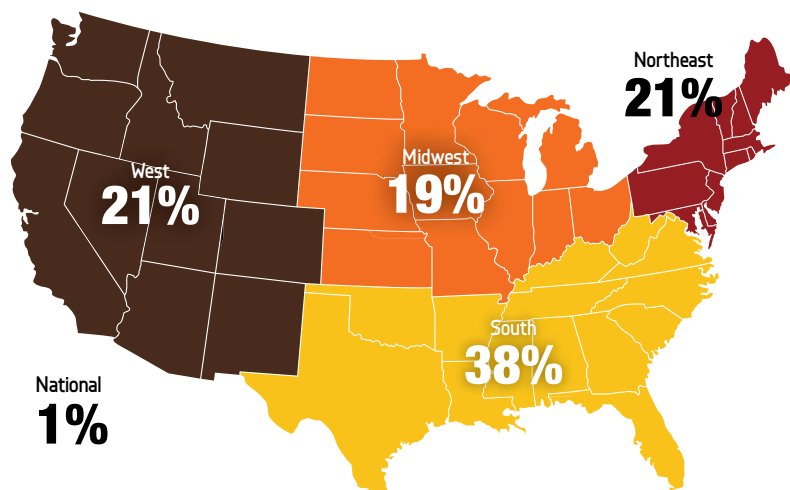
MACY RUIZ, BCE



ANDY SHRAWDER

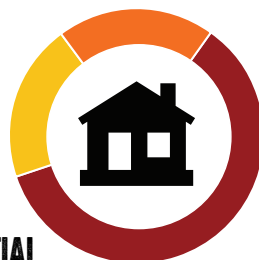
2021 ANT MANAGEMENT SURVEY

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.

ANT MANAGEMENT REVENUE BY STRUCTURE TYPE



RESIDENTIAL

25% or less of ant management revenue: 20%
 26% to 50% of ant management revenue: 20%
 51% or more of ant management revenue: 60%

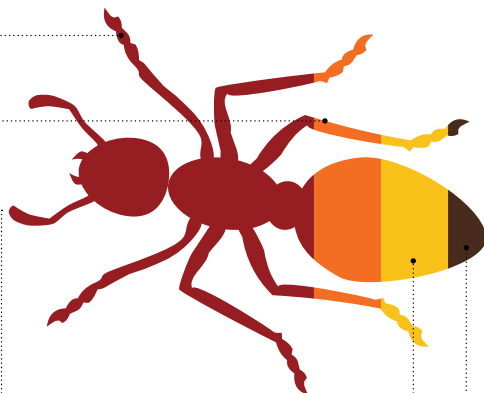
PROJECTED 2021 TOTAL REVENUE

\$499,999 or less: 64%

\$500,000 to \$999,999: 14%

\$1 million to \$4,999,999: 14%

\$5 million or more: 8%



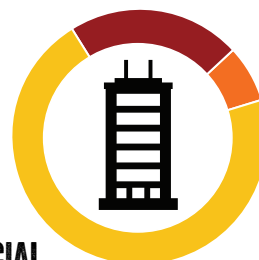
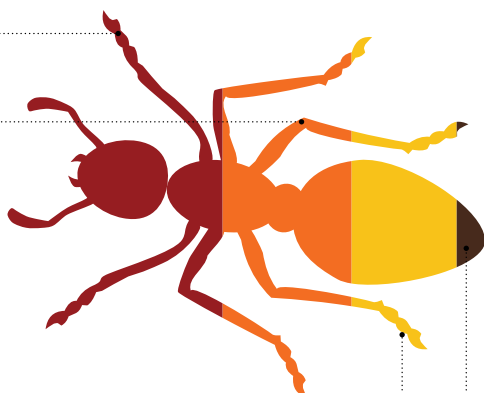
PROJECTED 2021 ANT MANAGEMENT REVENUE

\$49,999 or less: 45%

\$50,000 to \$99,999: 27%

\$100,000 to \$999,999: 22%

\$1 million or more: 6%



COMMERCIAL

25% or less of ant management revenue: 71%
 26% to 50% of ant management revenue: 22%
 51% or more of ant management revenue: 7%



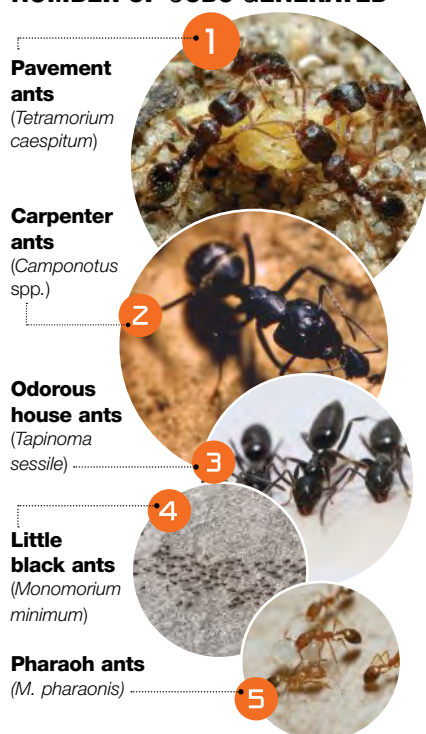
GOVERNMENT/ MUNICIPAL

25% or less of ant management revenue: 97%
 26% to 50% of ant management revenue: 1%
 51% or more of ant management revenue: 2%

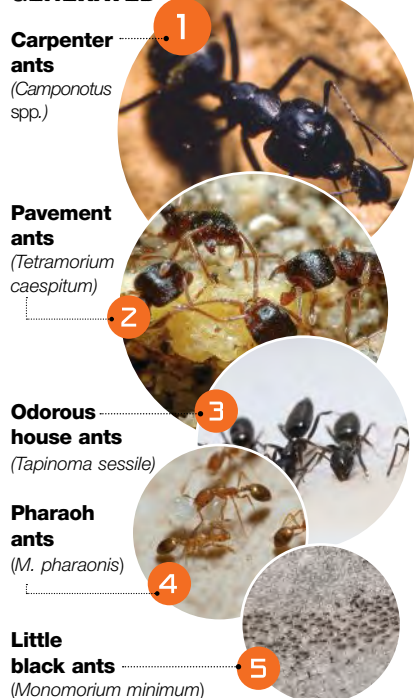


SOURCE: PMP ONLINE SURVEY CONDUCTED FEBRUARY-MAY 2021

TOP 5 PEST ANTS BY NUMBER OF JOBS GENERATED



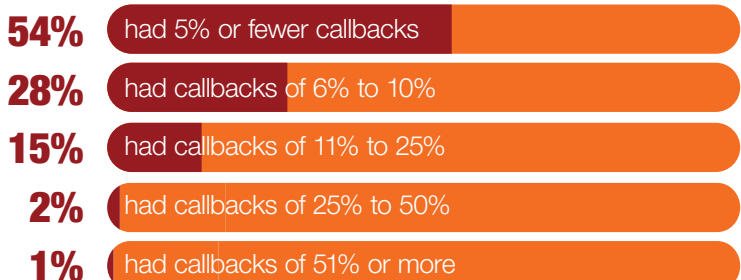
TOP 5 PEST ANTS BY NUMBER OF CALLBACKS GENERATED



PROJECTED 2021 ANT MANAGEMENT REVENUE FROM LIQUID TREATMENTS



CALLBACK PERCENTAGE ON NEW ANT TREATMENTS IN 2020



PROJECTED 2021 ANT CALLBACK RATE COMPARED WITH 2020



TOP OPPORTUNITIES TO GROWING ANT MANAGEMENT REVENUE

- 1 Rebounding economy
- 2 Improved renewal conversion rates
- 3 Better job pricing
- 4 Lower material costs
- 5 Fewer callbacks, which improves margins

TOP OBSTACLES TO GROWING ANT MANAGEMENT REVENUE

- 1 Sluggish economy
- 2 Lack of qualified technicians
- 3 Fierce pricing competition

CONTINUED FROM PAGE AM3

Ants can be found in all 50 states, and are active throughout the entire year.

“While ants are not a vector of disease, they can be destructive, like carpenter ants; painful, like fire ants; or just a downright nuisance — insert various species here,” Shrawder quips. “The success ants enjoy easily can be leveraged into the success of any pest management operation.”

Technical Services Manager Scott

Robbins, ACE, who works

for Action Pest Control in Evansville, Ind., says proper identification of the ant species tells many things: preferred nesting habits, food sources, single or multiple queens, nesting sites and peak activity periods.

“These can be interpreted to where to look, what types of control agents to use, how large a population there may be and how easily control might be achieved,” he says. “Some species are more difficult to manage than others, so proper identification can be used to set customer expectations on how easily control can be achieved.”

PMP’s 2021 Ant Management Survey shows the top pest ants by number of jobs generated has changed since last year. Pavement ants have taken the top spot, displacing carpenter ants.

“A thorough inspection is vital to any PMP’s success,” says Thayer Thacker, manager of the Mr. Pack Rat division at Truly Nolen of America in

Tucson, Ariz. “No two properties or structures are exactly the same, and each have their own challenges. Figuring out the best locations to apply material is, to me, an enjoyable challenge.”

He adds the No. 1 obstacle *and* opportunity is correctly identifying the species. If identified correctly, control is much easier.

“Ants are one of the most prolific pests PMPs and our customers deal with each day,” says Robert Blalock, owner of Beeline Pest Services in Yelm, Wash. “However, not all ant species are the same, so not every ant treatment should be the same. Positively identifying the species of ant is crucial.”

He cites as an example the use of repellents against budding species — such as pharaoh ants or

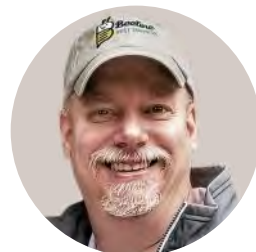
Odorous house ants (*Tapinoma sessile*) rank third on PMP’s list of top pest ants by number of jobs generated.



odorous house ants — that can make an infestation worse and result in unwanted, costly callbacks and frustrated customers.

It’s why he gives all his technicians the tools needed to properly identify ants by species. Magnifying glasses with built-in lights make the task easier, and small containers allow for the collection of samples that can be returned to the office for positive identification if needed.

“We also can’t stress enough to read and understand all product labels,” Blalock adds.



ROBERT BLALOCK

APPLY PROPER PRODUCTS

“In my experience, when we have a pest control failure, 90 percent of the time it is because we missed something,” Thacker says. “The materials available on the market today have good residuals and are highly effective — provided we apply them in the correct locations.”

Blalock considers ant management to be an important customer service. Besides being a nuisance, ants can nest in wall voids, attics, roofs and even electrical boxes, where they can cause all sorts of expensive damage.

“Ant management not only provides customers peace of mind, but can protect their properties from damage, both seen and unseen,” he adds. “It’s better to pay me a few hundred dollars today than to spend tens of thousands of dollars on repairs later.”

Fortunately for PMPs, ants are the best advocates for pest control.

“The sight of 50 ants trailing across the kitchen counter makes the phone ring faster than the best advertisement,” Robbins concludes. PMP

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SCOTT ROBBINS, ACE



THAYER THACKER



REMEMBER THAT TIME...

Some ant jobs are so challenging, you just can't forget them. We asked pest management professionals (PMPs) to share their stories of the largest or most perplexing ant infestations they ever encountered, and they did not disappoint.

A local ferry terminal had severe pavement ant (*Tetramorium immigrans*) issues for years. The large, old structure was built on soil; it had no basement or crawlspace. I was fighting ants in the bar, restaurant and offices. Liquids, baits, dusts — nothing worked.

"Finally, I asked the owner to drill some holes in the floor so I could get the bait closer to the ants. He drilled 3-inch-diameter holes with screw-on covers like you see on a boat. Ferry owners are very industrious, and think about the boats. I baited these holes and gained success within one month. Now, they are a monthly client with no ants."

— **Tom Sieminski, President, Team Pest Control, Sayville, N.Y.**



TOM SIEMINSKI

A hospital with eight floors, where a water leak started in the roof's mechanical rooms, created a perfect environment for Argentine ants (*Linepithema humile*). The ants infested the entire eight floors, which consisted of patient rooms, nurse's stations, medicine rooms, waiting rooms, and more. It took me almost six months to finally rid this hospital of ants using liquid non-repellent products, granular baits and borates; trimming the vegetation away from the structure; spraying a liquid barrier along the foundation with a non-repellent product; and placing liquid baits in ant bait stations. Six employees were involved the first two weeks, including two managers. The next month, though, it was just me visiting this location daily."

— **Macy Ruiz, BCE, Technical Services Manager, Rentokil, Reading, Pa.**

Many years ago, we treated a home on wood stilts for western carpenter ants (*Camponotus modoc*). It was located directly on the beach of an island only accessible by ferry. The infestation was so bad, we needed to tent and fumigate the home. To do so, we needed to rent a ferry just to transport ourselves, the products and gear. We needed

permission and supervision from the Washington Department of Ecology to ensure we did not damage the frail ecosystem of the island or surrounding Puget Sound.

"Using a skeleton crew, we needed to set up the tarps quickly while the tide was out, wait until the following day for low tide to begin treatment, and then return the following day to air out the home and remove the tarps.

"In total, it took a crew of 15 techs, a dozen vehicles, tons of gear, and four full days to complete the job. But more than 20 years later, the home is still carpenter ant-free, and on the short list of becoming an historic landmark, all because we stepped in to provide a service no other pest control company wanted to touch." — **Robert Blalock, Owner, Beeline Pest Services, Yelm, Wash.**

In the mountains north of Vancouver, Wash., a young family purchased a home away from the city to live closer to nature. What they didn't know was there was a massive western carpenter ant colony nesting inside the walls and ceilings. We tried injection treatments with foam in the areas, where we could observe notable frass coming between the logs, as well as the ceiling beams.

"We thought we gained control, but then the husband started on a renovation/remodel project. As he began pulling out wall planks, he discovered the colony ran the entire length of the main north wall — from the basement all the way to the peak of the vaulted ceiling on the second floor. The job required multiple visits, and we had to treat the entire interior wall structure of the home as well as about a dozen stumps around the property.

"The problem originated when the builder cut down a large, 3-foot-diameter evergreen tree that stood adjacent to the foundation. Instead of burning or grinding out the stump, he just poured the concrete pad for the patio right over the top of it! The stump was riddled with carpenter ants that worked their way right up the walls.

"In the end, the customer had no choice but to replace the entire wall on one side of the home, and major portions of the roof." — **Jana Claus, Vice President, Natura Pest Control, Vancouver, Wash.**



JANA CLAUS

In a 10-building apartment complex, four of the 12-unit apartment buildings had a terrible pharaoh ant (*Monomorium pharaonis*) problem. In each apartment, we used granular baits to treat interior wall voids, gel baits in cracks and crevices, and granular baits on the exterior, making sure not to use any repellents to cause budding. Four technicians worked on the initial service, and then one technician each month thereafter.

"We were very lucky; it worked like a charm. Within six months, there was no more ant activity. It's impossible to say how many colonies or ants there were. This was back in 1993, and I just started my pest control career. I had never heard of pharaoh ants before that, but I will never forget them!"

— **Thomas Miles, Owner, BLR Pest Control, Danville, Ky.**

A ferry travels across Puget Sound, Wash., at sunset, against a backdrop of the Olympic Mountains.



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