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Pest Management
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Inspect, ID to Succeed

2023 ANT MANAGEMENT SUPPLEMENT

A NORTH COAST MEDIA PUBLICATION

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Invasive ant species are on the rise

Many of the pests we face in urban pest management are not native to the United States. The introduction and establishment of these invasive species won't be slowing down anytime soon — and may be worse than previously thought. Their rapid spread and destructive behaviors have brought forth challenges and threats to ecosystems, economies and overall human well-being.

Invasive ants, specifically, are some of the most prevalent and detrimental invaders around the world. According to new research published this year in *Current Biology*, most invasive ants transported to regions outside of their native ranges were able to successfully naturalize there¹. Moreover, the scientific community has observed a decline in native ant abundance in areas where invasive ants have spread.

In another study published this year, which evaluated dozens of species of leaf-litter ant communities in Florida, researchers found that non-native ants are on their way to becoming the dominant species, especially in the southern part of the state². Within the 54-year study period (1965 to 2019), non-native ants jumped from comprising two of the Top 10 most common ant species in the state, to now six.

While the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) employs various strategies to prevent the entry and spread of non-native ants, many species dwelling within the litter and soil go undetected by border inspection efforts. Surprisingly, only one third of these invasive ants were caught during global border interceptions; the others quietly sneaked their way in as stowaways¹.

Chances are you've recently encountered or managed invasive ants in the field. A few common ones include tawny crazy ants (*Nylanderia fulva*), Argentine ants (*Linepithema humile*), red imported fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*), and pavement ants (*Tetramorium immigrans*). Early detection, swift response and ongoing management are crucial

to minimize the environmental, economic and social impacts inflicted by these invaders.

Control Solutions Inc. (CSI) is proud to offer a variety of products and formulations for managing tough ant problems. When choosing which solution is right for the job, applicators should consider the pest species, the application site and its conditions, and the type of active ingredient(s) it contains (repellent or non-repellent chemistries). Protecting structures with perimeter applications is common practice in ant management, and Fuse is an effective tool for this. Fuse is a proprietary CSI product that combines two non-repellent active ingredients, imidacloprid and fipronil, making it one of the most powerful ant control products available on the market.

What sets CSI apart as an industry leader in pesticide manufacturing is our proactive approach to understanding the specific needs and challenges faced by pest management professionals (PMPs). We actively engage with the pest control community, listening to PMPs' feedback and incorporating it into our research and development processes.

This collaborative approach ensures CSI's solutions are tailored to meet the diverse requirements of the industry, allowing professionals to achieve quick-acting and long-lasting control. At CSI, our mission is to develop and deliver **innovation you can apply**.



BY HEATHER PATTERSON
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Control Solutions Inc. (CSI)

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SMART management strategies

Ant control can be challenging, but PMPs with patience and perseverance will be rewarded

By Diane Sofranec | PMP Senior Editor



Ant management generates the most revenue and profits of all other pest control segments — including rodent, cockroach and termite services.

That's according to *Pest Management Professional's* (PMP's) 2023 State of the Industry Report (see p. S13 of the November 2022 issue).

Pest management professionals (PMPs) who implement effective ant control strategies will be rewarded with satisfied customers and additional revenue. When it comes to ants, hiring a pro is the way to go.

"With so many resources available to do-it-yourselfers (DIYers) for an ant issue, a customer can certainly prolong their ant problems, and make them worse," notes Dan Dubai, owner of Dan's Pest Control in Bend, Ore. "The more PMPs can help customers understand the strategy of our service, the more confident they will feel in the science of the solution and trust the process."



Dan Dubai

Thorough inspections

Chris McLendon, owner of Divergent Pest Management in Cartersville, Ga., takes the direct route with customers. During inspections, he will ask customers to come see what he uncovered, be it

a trail of ants or a nest outside the back door. When that's not possible, he pulls out his smartphone to record a video, and then shows the customer what he found either in person or via text.

"This adds major value because customers can see in the video why they are paying a professional rather than going the DIY route," McLendon explains. "The pro knows where to look."

Many customers who need ant control already have tried — and failed — to solve the problem themselves. Or, they hired a pest control company that could not eliminate the pests.

"It isn't very difficult to convey the 'you get what you pay for' idea to customers who have called for ant control services," McLendon adds. "Customers usually are well aware the problem isn't a simple one to solve."

Inspection is a critical part of the ant control process, and it takes time. McLendon says he tells each potential customer he will treat their house not only like it's his own, but like it's his mom's.

"I let them know solving their problem is my top priority, rather than completing the appointment as quickly or cheaply as possible," he adds. "If I need to spend an hour on the



Chris McLendon

Continued on page AM6



Ant Management Survey

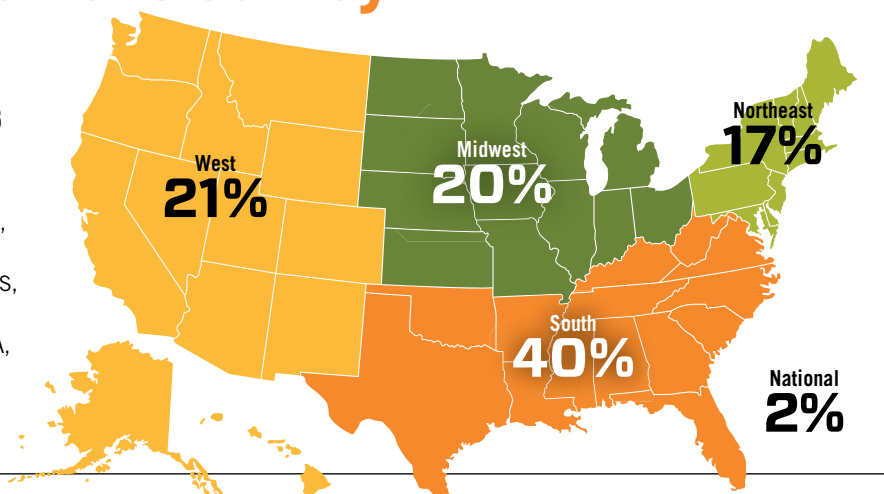
Area of Operations

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, DC)



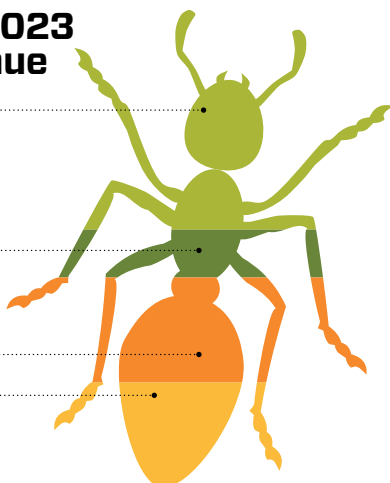
Projected 2023 Total Revenue

46%
\$499,999 or less

10%
\$500,000 to \$999,999

22%
\$1 million to \$4,999,999

22%
\$5 million or more



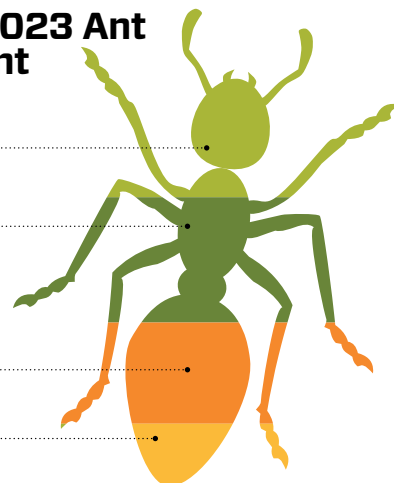
Projected 2023 Ant Management Revenue

40%
\$499,999 or less

26%
\$500,000 to \$999,999

21%
\$1 million to \$4,999,999

13%
\$5 million or more



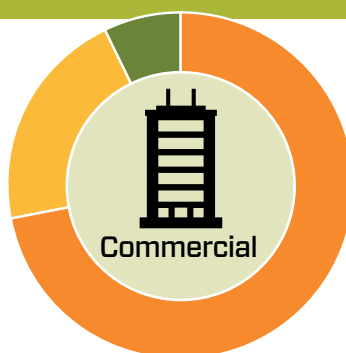
2023 ANT MANAGEMENT REVENUE BY STRUCTURE TYPE



25% or less of ant management revenue: **13%**

26% to 50% of ant management revenue: **21%**

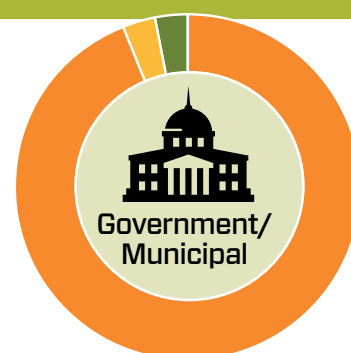
51% or more of ant management revenue: **66%**



25% or less of ant management revenue: **72%**

26% to 50% of ant management revenue: **21%**

51% or more of ant management revenue: **7%**



25% or less of ant management revenue: **94%**

26% to 50% of ant management revenue: **3%**

51% or more of ant management revenue: **3%**

Projected 2023 callback rate compared with 2022



47% expect improvement

49% expect to remain flat

4% expect to worsen

Top opportunities to growing ant management revenue

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



Top obstacles to growing ant management revenue

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

Top 5 Pest Ants by Number of Jobs Generated

1
Carpenter ants
(*Camponotus* spp.)



2
Pavement ants
(*Tetramorium caespitum*)



3
Odorous house ants
(*Tapinoma sessile*)



4
Little black ants
(*Monomorium minimum*)

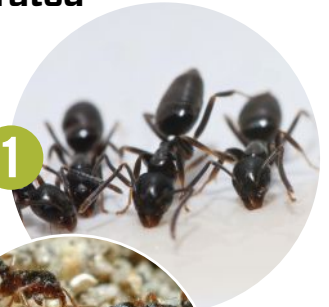


5
Pharaoh ants
(*M. pharaonis*)

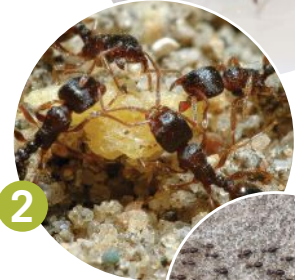


Top 5 Pest Ants by Number of Callbacks Generated

1
Odorous house ants
(*Tapinoma sessile*)



2
Pavement ants
(*Tetramorium caespitum*)



3
Little black ants
(*Monomorium minimum*)



TIE:
Carpenter ants
(*Camponotus* spp.)
and Pharaoh ants
(*M. pharaonis*)



5
Fire ants
(*Solenopsis* spp.)





Continued from page AM3

initial service conducting a thorough inspection or come back for a follow-up service in a week, I'm happy to do that. I charge enough to still be profitable."

Positive identification

Finding technicians who will treat their customers' homes like their mother's has been a challenge. PMPs who answered our 2023 Ant Management Survey said the top obstacle to growing ant management revenue is a lack of qualified technicians. It was the top response they gave in 2022, too.

Scott Hornemann, ACE, is the field training, quality and safety director for Adam's Pest Control Inc. in Medina, Minn. He agrees that hiring technicians who want to learn the details when it comes to ant control is a challenge. Effective control depends on technicians who are trained to properly identify ant species, however.

"With proper identification, you will be able to treat efficiently and effectively based on differing biology and habits," Hornemann says. "Training for proper pest identification allows technicians to use their integrated pest management (IPM) skills so they

can eliminate the current issue, and provide prevention tactics to the customer."

Invasive species often make identification more challenging. Collect a sample and seek out expert advice from entomologists to ensure you are on the right track.

Consider calling on colleagues who may have encountered similar species, and representatives of manufacturers that offer ant control solutions.

Elimination and prevention tactics

Of course, there's more to ant control than making a positive ID. PMPs need to eliminate the pests, and take steps to prevent them from returning, Hornemann says.

"PMPs will know how to eliminate and prevent a specific ant species issue based on nesting habits and locations; reproductive habits, such as how many queens and colonies a specific species may



“Most people appreciate honesty, even if it isn't the answer they want to hear.”

Melanie Foster

have; feeding habits, including where, how and what the species forages for; and knowing the differences in the life cycles, biology and behavior of our most prevalent problematic pest ants," he explains.

Once PMPs gather this information, they will be able to choose the proper chemicals and formulations, and where to apply them for successful control, Hornemann says.

Technicians need to take good notes of what, how and where any treatments were completed, along with the habitat reduction recommendations they gave customers, he adds.

Clear communication

Melanie Foster, co-owner of Foster's Pest Control in Ruckersville, Va., says she believes it's important to take the time to share how the treatment will work and what customers should expect.

"Our technicians explain there is no magic wand to instantly remove ant populations," Foster says. "By explaining the process, you help customers understand ant control is a process and will take time. But if everyone works together, the chance of success dramatically increases."

Foster's technicians also emphasize to customers that using over-the-counter products around treatment areas is counterproductive because it will slow down the entire control process.

"Remind customers to resist the urge to go on a killing spree with a wet paper towel and some spray cleaner. Most people appreciate honesty, even if it isn't the answer they want to hear," Foster adds. "Unrealistic expectations will only lead to frustration and unhappy customers."

To ensure success, it is critical customers know ant control is a team effort, and that they are an important member of that team, she says.

Communication works both ways, and PMPs can learn a lot when they listen to their customers.

"Hearing their stories often will guide me to better treatments," Dubay says. "Take time to inspect, then take a step back and connect the dots. Communicate with customers so they can help you help them." **PMP**

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Scott Hornemann



Ants can be anywhere

From Argentine ants (*Linepithema humile*) on a soundstage to tawny crazy ants (*Nylanderia fulva*) in a warehouse, to fire ants (*Solenopsis* spp.) at a playground and odorous house ants (*Tapinoma sessile*) in a nursing home, customers call on pest management professionals (PMPs) to stop ant infestations in a variety of places.

Pests spoil the vibe

Jeff Rice, ACE, owner of Environmental Pest Management in Indiana, Pa., used his ant control expertise to return a beautifully decorated “she shed” to the relaxing refuge it was meant to be. His inspection revealed carpenter ants (*Camponotus* spp.) throughout the rough-cut wood paneled walls on the interior of the structure. To get in and out of the nest, the ants chewed small holes in the paneling.

“There were minimal visual indicators that this nest was as large as it was,” he says. “I had to perform a very thorough inspection to identify and locate the entry and exit holes the ants constructed.”

Next, he had to determine the best control solution based on the size and location of the nest, the décor inside the shed, and the need for immediate results. Ultimately, he chose a dust application that flowed throughout the galleries and identified additional entry and exit holes not visible during his initial inspection. After about 15 minutes, a few thousand carpenter ants were dead on the floor.

“One treatment, one massive carpenter ant nest eliminated. It was very satisfying,” he says. “Taking the time to investigate the situation, examine the scenario, and visualize the result is essential to aid in material selection, application rates, application areas and all other factors that result in successful control.”



Jeff Rice

Fake grass presents a real problem

As service manager for The Bugman in Anaheim, Calif., James Fowler, ACE, advises PMPs to treat each home like a new problem to solve because no two homes are the same.

Interview the homeowners to learn what they are doing that could be attracting pests to their properties, he adds, and then help educate them on the conducive conditions they are creating.



James Fowler

That's exactly what Fowler did when a customer who installed fake grass in his yard created the perfect environment for a massive Argentine ant colony.

“The homeowner installed the fake grass himself on top of bare soil and did not place any crushed rock or sand under it for drainage,” Fowler recalls. “He would hose down the ‘grass’ once a week to wash away pet waste, but because there was no drainage, the moisture stayed directly under the ‘grass.’”

After pulling up the fake grass, Fowler found more than 10 nests. By then, the ants were entering the customer's home. Once he discovered the nests, Fowler devised a treatment strategy that resulted in 100 percent control after three applications. Correcting the customer's behavior of hosing down the “grass” also was key to Fowler's success.

Fowler says he shares an analogy to help customers understand the need to eliminate conducive conditions. “This conducive condition is like having a neon sign in your yard that says ‘Free Beer,’ and then you get upset at the people who show up to claim that free beer,” he quips. “Just take the sign down, and they will stop coming.”

Preventing unwanted guests

Doug Foster, president of Burt's Termite & Pest Control in Columbus, Ind., and a *Pest Management Professional* Editorial Advisory Board member, devised a proactive ant management program for a customer with a persistent ant problem.

Every spring, ants would appear in several ground floor rooms of an inn located in a state park. As a result, some customers would complain to management, which would then offer refunds. For the past eight years, in February or March depending on the weather, technicians have applied nonrepellent liquid and granular baits around the exterior of the building *before* ant season kicks in. This strategy has been very successful, Foster reports.

“Between the cost to the bottom line of refunding room charges to guests, and damage to the inn's reputation, management was looking for answers,” he recalls. “We took the concept of termite prevention and adapted it to ant control.”

PMPs should evaluate which customers have recurring problems, and approach them with solutions early in the season, he says, adding, “The benefit is also that you are not in the midst of the spring rush, so you have more time and manpower to implement ant control proactive programs.” —D.S.



Doug Foster



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