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HOW TO RID HOMES OF ANTS

Many people that begin to have ant problems in the home and kitchen areas, reach for the aerosol can. But spraying leaves pesticide residue everywhere and hopefully not on your kitchen counter, and worse yet, does not kill out the nest. For many kinds of ant species in Southeast Nebraska, the best tactic is to be patient and use a bait instead. Baits are the best management tactic because the entire colony can be destroyed which is usually located near the home outdoors. This results in a more permanent solution to your ant problem. In addition, many baits have low toxicity to people and pets.

The trick to using baits is to make sure that the offending ants find the bait, eat it voraciously and take it back to the nest to the queen. If residual insecticide sprays are used, the foraging ants may die before they feed or take the bait back to the nest, counteracting the effectiveness of the bait. Do not use insecticide sprays if you want to bait for ant control. If the bait is attractive to the ants, the entire colony will be destroyed within a few weeks. No insecticide sprays will be necessary.

Not all ant species can be controlled by baits and some baits work better than others. In general, ants that eat a wide variety of foods will be less affected by baits because the bait will comprise a smaller proportion of their food. Sugar-loving ants are the easiest to control.

The easiest way to wipe out the tiny sweet loving ants is to trick them with jelly first. You can use jelly to increase the ant foraging behavior and make the toxic bait more effective. Apply a ribbon of jelly (1-1/2" x 1/4") to masking tape in the areas where you have seen the offending ants, especially around water sources or window ledge or near a slider door. Masking tape works great because it stays in place and is easy to remove and discard later. Experts say that mint or mint apple jelly seems to be the most attractive to foraging sugar ants. A plastic squeeze bottle with a pointed tip makes a convenient applicator.

Sweet-loving ants should begin feeding on the jelly within a couple hours. These "survey stations" can be used to pinpoint areas that should be baited. Experts say to use one survey station for each 50 square feet of living space and each 15-20 feet around the house. This can mean lots of jelly and masking tape; however, later you will be able to use the toxic bait more efficiently and save time and money in the long run.

About two hours after setting out the jelly stations, you should count the number of ants foraging at each station. If there are more than 10 ants feeding at the station, the toxic bait should be placed at the active site. If there is tape with no feeding ants, the masking tape with jelly ribbon is discarded. The most successful baits are those that contain a slow-acting stomach poison so the foraging ant workers will take the bait back to the queen in her nest. We recommend baits with the active ingredient boric acid, borax (one example is Terro®) or hydramethylnon as their active ingredient.

For grease and protein-loving ants (big-headed ants, little black ants and pavement ants), they can be baited also. They respond best to protein/grease baits. To make your own, use 2 ounces (4



tablespoons) peanut butter; 3 ounces (6 tablespoons) honey and 3/4 teaspoon boric acid. There are some commercially available baits (DRAX®-FP) that will also work too for grease-loving ants. By being patient and using these tips you will wipe out the colony.

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