

How can I make my property less attractive to ants?



Indoors :

- Where ant trails enter your house, use a permethrin spray (e.g. Ant Ban) on surfaces that will not be affected by weather. Block off obvious entry points.
- Keep all at-risk foods (especially sugary ones and proteins) in sealed containers in your fridge and check fridge doors to ensure seals work properly, particularly on corners. Remove crumbs, including from microwaves and stoves.
- Clean surfaces favoured by ants with lemon juice, soapy water or diluted vinegar, eucalyptus or tea tree oil.
- Put pet food bowls in a tray of water.
- If you have a problem with ants in bedrooms, move beds away from walls, keep sheets and blankets up off the floor.

Outdoors :

- When gardening, cover up disturbed nests until they can be treated.
- Don't leave food scraps or food sources lying on the ground, especially near your house.
- Reduce moisture sources, for example leaky taps, irrigation hoses, etc.
- Trim trees near your house to reduce ant access.
- Spray affected trees for scale insects and aphids
- Stand recycle and rubbish bins and picnic table legs in water with a little bleach added.

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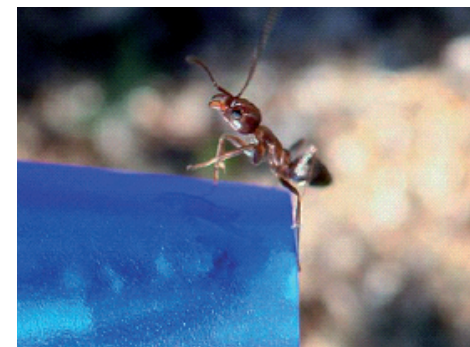
09 366 2000 www.arc.govt.nz/biosecurity

For more information on plant
& animal pests phone ARC on:
(09) 366 2000 (Auckland free calling area)
0800 80 60 40 (outside the free calling area)



Argentine ants

Linepithema humile



An Argentine ant on the tip of a ball point pen

Introduction

Argentine ant (*Linepithema humile*) is among the 100 most invasive species on Earth. First discovered in New Zealand in 1990, it is believed to have reached Auckland via potted plants, freight or wood and is now found throughout the region, especially in urban areas. Argentine ants are aggressive and can form super-colonies of immense size which threaten the region's environment, economy and lifestyle. Argentine ant bites are not poisonous but can be irritating and cause allergic-type reactions in some people. In New Zealand, Argentine ants threaten native insects, lizards and native birds, either attacking them directly or by competing for food like nectar and honeydew. Overseas studies have shown that Argentine ants can

have a significant negative impact on natural ecosystems, as they affect natural processes from the soil through to insect communities, and even the pollination of flowering trees.

How do I recognise them?



Argentine ants :

- are 2-3mm long and are a pale honey-brown colour (unlike most house ants, which are black);
- travel steadily in defined continuous trails up to five or six ants (or 2cm) wide;
- eat sweet things, but also seek out protein (e.g. meat, eggs, fish), and will consume dead insects and other small animals;
- walk or swarm over objects, people or animals, rather than skirting around them;
- like warm, dry places and nest almost anywhere, but especially on the ground under timber, metal or concrete, plant pots, boats, caravans and tents;
- are excellent infiltrators! Screw-top jars, closed microwaves, stoves and fridges do not always stop them;
- are commonly found on citrus trees along with high numbers of aphids. The ants farm the aphids for honeydew.

If you suspect you have Argentine ants on your property bring a sample in a well sealed container with your name, address and phone number to the Auckland Regional Council.

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How can I kill Argentine ants?

Argentine ants are extremely difficult insects to control. The **only** effective control method currently available is Xstinguish™ Argentine ant bait. This product is available through 'Flybusters AntiAnts' 0800 83 70 70 or Garrards NZ Ltd 0800 222 270.

WARNING: Do not try to eradicate Argentine ants with other ant control products. Not only do these products not work, they may also disturb the colony's queens which can split up the nest allowing the formation of multiple new nests elsewhere.

About Xstinguish™ Argentine ant bait

This pale green paste bait is not harmful to humans. Its active toxin 'fipronil' is found at levels about 1000 times less than that used in flea treatment for cats. Ants are attracted to the Xstinguish™ bait, which they carry off to their nest for the rest of the colony (including queen and young) to share. This destroys the colony with minimum impact on other organisms. It may take an hour or so for the ants to start taking the bait, and up to 6 to 8 hours for it to spread amongst the whole colony. You can still eat from your garden - just wash any plants that you pick that day for consumption.

How to lay Xstinguish™ bait

- Check with neighbours. If they have an Argentine ant infestation too, properties should be baited on the same day for maximum effect. If possible, plan baiting to coincide with high levels of ant activity, for example mid-summer. (Ants forage in the garden in summer and most nests will be sited there.)
- Use a caulking gun to squeeze out the paste. Lay bait in small 'blobs' similar to the amount of toothpaste you would put on your toothbrush. A 325 gram tube should cover 1100m² of flat land.
- Squeeze bait out onto the ground in a grid pattern at regular intervals of 1m to 2m. In bark gardens, the spacing should reduce to 1m x 1m, but in open grass areas, it can increase to 2m - 3m.
- Target cracks and crevices where Argentine ants have been seen. Baits can actually help identify where the nests

are sited. Follow the trail from the bait to find the nest. Put baits as close to the nests as possible.

- If you see ants up trees, apply bait at the base of trees and along branches, where you can reach, if heavy trails are sighted.
- Put bait in shady places to help prevent evaporation (Tip: cover it with a large leaf).
- Do not lay bait inside buildings, as the bait will draw all ants inside.
- Keep other animals away from treatment area for at least four hours. While no harm will come to them if they eat it, you will have to re-bait. Placing the bait in hose pipe or irrigation tube will help prevent the bait from drying out and stop animals eating the bait.

NOTE: the bait is toxic to fish and other aquatic organisms so do not lay within at least three metres of ponds, streams and stormwater channels such as gutters.

- Keep any left-over bait in the fridge (remains viable for three weeks), away from food, and use it to treat remaining nests.
- Re-baiting will be needed about 8-12 weeks later (late summer) to kill any survivors/ subsequently hatched ants. Watch for areas that might have been very heavily infested as these may need to be re-treated.
- Slow release poisons such as Antstop G granules can be used 7-10 days after baiting to help repel newly emerging colonies and re-infestation from neighbouring properties which were not baited with Xstinguish™.

How can I stop Argentine ants spreading?

- Check potted plants for ants before moving. If plants contain ants, treat with AntstopG or a similar contact insecticide.
- Check garden soil and bark, and building materials before moving.
- Check camping gear, before going to a campsite.
- Check cars, caravans, campervans, boats and trailers particularly if they've been in the same spot for some time. Spray the tyres with repellent such as Ant Ban.
- Use a repellent on recycling and rubbish bins.