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2022

**Summer Edition**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Valued Members:

It's no surprise that our industry has suffered major turnover due to retirements, other career changes, the pandemic, etc. Our industry has lots of new faces across the board. Some of our downfalls to keep good people are training failures and pushing them in the field too soon. That usually trends to turnover and setting up our techs to fail. They don't have a clue of what to do when they come across a pest problem that they never were properly trained for. **We as owners and management must take the time to train our new PCO's to be our successors and mentors for our future generations.** These days consumers have very high expectations from pest control operators due to internet education, word of mouth and especially reviews. Pest management technicians are to provide safe, effective pest management services to the consumer and protect the environment. It's all of our jobs to make sure he or she are well trained, given all the tools to do their jobs and given all the PPE to do their jobs safely. Let's not assume they're a 100% ready for the field until you spend time with him or her.

Every one of us is having a hard time hiring good candidates these days but the moment we hire one we must give that person or persons our undivided support. **Back in the day a old friend told me speed of the leader, speed of the group. If you lead them they will follow...**

**ART WHITE,** *2022 GCPMA President*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE






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# The WILD Life

BY JANE PEIFER, *Ampest Exterminating & Wildlife Control*

## 'A MAMMAL THAT LAYS EGGS??'

I was listening to a radio station a few weeks ago and they were promoting a contest. I don't remember the prize but the question was interesting and caught my attention. They asked "What mammal lays eggs? I was curious so I looked it up.

There are actually two mammals that lay eggs and feed milk to their young (or puggles as they're known). Only five species of animals share this extraordinary egg-laying trait: the duck-billed platypus, and four echidna species, the western long-beaked echidna, eastern long-beaked echidna, short-beaked echidna, and Sir David's long-beaked echidna.

In the scientific world, this is called a monotreme. Monotremes are mammals that reproduce by laying eggs. Their name comes from Greek and means "single opening," which refers to the fact that they have only one opening for both reproductive and waste removal purposes.

Monotremes are only found in either Australia or New Guinea. They are all quite elusive, so little is known about their daily habits and mating rituals. The echidnas, who use their fur as camouflage, spend most of the day hiding in fallen trees or empty burrows. Most of their activity happens at night when they dig for ants, termites, and other small invertebrates using their highly adapted sense of smell. Rivers and waterways are the natural habitat for the platypus, which is also nocturnal. They can spend over 10 hours a night hunting for food which consists of small animals like shrimp and crayfish.

**The following are some interesting facts about these egg laying mammals.**

### DUCK-BILLED PLATYPUS

With its distinct duck-like bill, this fascinating creature is found in Tasmania and Australia. The streamlined design of their bodies allows them to move gracefully in and under the water, where they live most of the time. Interestingly, they can produce venom from the spurs in their feet. While it can harm smaller animals, it will not kill a human.

Platypuses feed on small aquatic animals and locate their food by using their highly sensitive snouts. They often travel along the bottom of a riverbed and dig through the sediment in search of things to eat. These animals are ready to mate at two years of age and often have more than one partner in their lifetime. When the female prepares to lay her eggs, she goes off to a secluded den by herself to wait out the process. She will typically only lay one to three eggs.

A baby platypus, known as a puggle, is hairless and about the size of a human hand when it's born. It will nurse with its mother in a protective pouch for a few months and eventually get moved to a burrow as it grows older. By 4 or 5 months old, the baby is ready to learn how to swim.

### WESTERN LONG-BEAKED ECHIDNA

The western long-beaked echidna is an unusual animal found in New Guinea. They are the largest of the monotremes, weighing in at nearly 40 pounds.

Earthworms are their main dietary staple, and they have three strong, sharp claws which they use to dig and for protection — although these animals are quite submissive and would be more likely to curl up in a tight ball to protect themselves than engage in an attack.

Mating season occurs one month during the summer, and it is usual for a female echidna to have only one offspring. Sadly, illegal poaching and destruction of native habitats have led to a decline in its population. Today, the western long-beaked echidna is considered critically endangered.

## EASTERN LONG-BEAKED ECHIDNA

Like their western long-beaked relatives, these eastern echidnas are much larger than the other monotremes. They are brown or black and don't have a tail, and their extremely tiny mouth sits at the very tip of their snout.

Eastern long-beaked echidna uses their sizable snout to follow scent trails and root through mud and dirt for food. They are mostly nocturnal and spend the nighttime hours hunting for insects, larva, and earthworms. Since they're so elusive, little is known about their reproductive cycle, but breeding probably occurs around April or May.



## SHORT-BEAKED ECHIDNA

Sometimes called "spiny anteater," the furry brown coat of a short-beaked echidna is covered in dozens of spiny quills, giving it the appearance of a hedgehog.

Because they have no teeth, their sticky tongue is used to catch termite ants and smash them inside their mouths. Short-beaked echidnas have an excellent sense of smell, which comes in handy when searching for potential mates during breeding season. It takes between 20 and 30 days for the female to gestate and lay an egg. The hatchling will live in a small pouch hidden in its mother's fur and nurse for several weeks until it's old enough to survive without her protection.

## SIR DAVID'S LONG-BEAKED ECHIDNA

Named for historian and naturalist, Sir David Attenborough, this echidna is found in New Guinea. It's the smallest of all the echidna, and sadly has been on the critically endangered list for quite some time.

Like other echidnas, it has small spurs on its hind legs that can be used when in danger. Typically, they are solitary, nocturnal creatures that spend most of their life alone, but once a year they come together for mating season. During the gestational period, the female creates a well-insulated den or burrow in preparation for the egg. After the baby has grown spines and fur and has nursed enough to grow bigger, it, too, will go on to live alone. Their lifespans are quite long and a few documented monotremes in captivity were recorded to have lived 45 to 50 years.

I know this article doesn't have anything to do with animals we encounter everyday in Illinois but I found it was so interesting that there are mammals that lay eggs. I learn something new every time I write an article!!

*Information in this article is provided by: www.treehugger.com.*

# THE KEY TO KEEPING KITCHENS PEST-FREE

CONTRIBUTED BY *ZOËCON*

We all know insect infestations can be a nuisance, but if left untreated, insects can also become a health and safety hazard. Infestations are especially threatening in kitchens, restaurants, and food-handling establishments. It's critical to cut these insect problems off at the source, to knock down kitchen pests quickly.

Zoëcon has developed a new product solution, Gentrol® Complete EC3, to help pest management professionals (PMPs) eliminate kitchen insect problems once and for all! Read on to learn more about the threat of kitchen insect infestations and how to implement this new product solution as part of an integrated pest management (IPM) protocol.

## UNDERSTANDING KITCHEN INSECT THREATS

Kitchens are warm, welcoming places where many customers like to entertain guests. Insects find kitchens and food establishment welcoming too. Many insects that infiltrate kitchens, like cockroaches, drain and fruit flies, or stored product pests, are drawn to the food, moisture, and warmth kitchens and food establishments offer. As temperatures get cooler, kitchens become even more of a refuge for a range of insects that can contaminate food and pose a serious health threat. In fact, even common house flies are capable of transmitting more than 100 various pathogens, such as typhoid, salmonellosis and tuberculosis.

Cockroaches, in particular, carry allergens through their excretion that can trigger allergic reactions and asthma, especially for children, not to mention the threat of food poisoning.

## IMPLEMENTING AN IPM APPROACH

For kitchen infestations, especially commercial kitchens where the health and well-being of many people are at stake, it's critical for customers to rely on the expertise of a PMP. Make sure your customers understand the importance of implementing a comprehensive IPM program to reduce pest populations and call-backs.

Prevent insects from entering into kitchen spaces by properly sealing plumbing fixtures. Be aware that pests can invade foodstuffs and use them as breeding grounds. Remove infested items and treat surrounding cracks, crevices and surfaces in order to control migrating immature stages and prevent adult emergence of hidden larvae.

## A NEW PRODUCT SOLUTION: GENTROL® COMPLETE EC3

Designed for food-handling establishments, Gentrol® Complete EC3 provides quick knockdown and lasting control over cockroaches and other listed pests. Offering broad-spectrum relief and simultaneously breaking the life cycles of German cockroaches, stored product pests, plus fruit flies and drain flies, Gentrol® Complete EC3 combines an insecticide with the control of Gentrol® IGR Concentrate.

Gentrol® Complete EC3 features a Multi-Rate Formulation to tackle all levels of a kitchen infestation. Check out some product features below:

- Active ingredient, (S)-hydroprene, breaks the life cycle of kitchen bugs and prevents rebound infestations
- Insect growth regulator (IGR) translocates deep into wall cavities, cracks and crevices
- Active Ingredients: 9% (S)-Hydroprene 1.5% Lambda-cyhalothrin
- For use in food and non-food areas of restaurants, food manufacturing, processing, and servicing establishments
- Can be used as a fogging agent, general surface spray, or tank mixed.

## TREATING KITCHEN INSECTS HAS NEVER BEEN SO EASY!

**Learn more at the Gentrol® Complete EC3 product page on the Zoecon website.**

ZOËCON® Professional Products

# ANT BAITING TIPS

BY JOSHUA VILLAZANA, M.SC., *Dynamic IPM Specialist*

**In the insect order Hymenoptera, there are approximately 13,500 different species of social insects, including bees, ants, and wasps. For ants alone, there are about 9,500 different species globally, and of those there are over 700 different ant species found in North America where, 25 are commonly found in structures. Furthermore, five are public health threats and potentially dangerous to humans.**

**PATHOGEN TRANSMISSION RISK.** When dealing with ants: bites and stings are something that pest management professionals (PMP) may unfortunately be familiar with. However, there is also potential for ants to transmit pathogens. This is especially important when planning to prevent ants from entering food plants. The pharaoh ant (Monomorium pharaonis) can transmit over a dozen pathogens such as Salmonella spp., Staphylococcus spp., and Streptococcus spp. (Beatson 1977; Haack and Granovsky 1990; Smith and Whitman 1992). All ants have the potential to be a source of food-borne illness because their nesting or foraging habits can contaminate food and packaging in food plants. Nest disturbances can cause a colony to migrate entire nests and can sometimes enter a semitruck with food products.

**ANT ENCOUNTERS.** The type of ants found in a food plant will vary based on geographical location and available resources. Some notable ants commonly encountered are the following.

- Carpenter ants (Camponotus spp.) will create galleries in wooden pallets or may harbor in voids of containers with product such as, cardboard boxes or products where ants have been foraging for food.
- Pavement ants (Tetramorium caespitum) can wonder through cracks in floors, expansion joints, and can be attracted to food spills inside or outside the building when foraging.
- If wood mulch is used around exterior areas of buildings. Odorous house ants (Tapinoma sessile) will build nests under mulch, rocks, or leaf litter, and have the potential to be brought in on mulch deliveries.

**ANT BAIT CONSIDERATIONS.** Baits are an effective form of ant control since they take advantage of ants' social characteristics. Palatability and environment are major factors to consider when selecting a liquid, gel, or granular bait formulation to be attractive to foragers so they will ingest the bait and share it within the colony. A granular bait would typically be used on the exterior close to the perimeter and a gel or liquid on the interior. Since baits tend to be slower acting than other forms of ant control; the delayed activity of the toxicant is key to ensuring distribution throughout the ant colony. There is a higher chance of getting ants to be attracted to a bait and taking it back to the queen vs. a pesticide spray that would kill the workers but not the queen, allowing them to return.

**FEEDING HABITS.** Gaining insight into the feeding habits of the ant swarm identified can help a PMP apply the right treatment protocol. Ants' feeding habits change depending on the time of year and the availability of various food sources. In spring and early summer, brood care is high in the colony. Therefore, ants require large amounts of protein, so they will forage for arthropod prey. Later in the summer, the colony pursues carbohydrates to provide sustained energy within the colony. For example, Pharaoh ants (M. pharaonis) enjoy sugars, proteins, oils and insects. Odorous house ants (Tapinoma sessile) like sugars and protein and Carpenter ants (C. spp.) prefer sugars and insects.

When unclear about which bait to use, prebaiting can save time and effort. With the use of a protein, sugar, or arthropod source, a PMP can use peanut butter or non-peanut substitute, jam or honey, ground insects, and oils on several insect glue board or tape to help determine which type of food the ants in question are most drawn to and can also help identify areas of heaviest activity and nest location.

**FINAL THOUGHTS.** Baiting is a powerful strategy for several reasons. Baits are pesticide applications that rely on the pests themselves. Since it is considered a food source to ants, they gladly take in the bait that will terminate them unknowingly. When possible, be sure to ask staff to remove alternate food sources and place the bait in areas where ants are active. This will help focus the ants on your bait. It is in the ants' interest to work together for maximum efficiency so, when baiting them make sure to use the appropriate type of bait, don't make them hunt for it, and use enough to get the job done.

*fsszone.com/ant-baiting-tips*

If your business serves and sells to pest management operators in the Chicagoland area,

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## 3 CREDIT HOURS & STATE TESTING EVENT

**When:** June 22, 2022
**Time:** Doors open at 8am

- *3 Ongoing Credit Hours session will begin at 8:30am*
- *Pre-Test Prep will begin at 9am with Curt Colwell*
- *Afternoon state testing to begin at 1pm*

**Visit gcpma.com to learn more & register**

# YELLOWJACKET OR PAPER WASP?

**BY KATHY KEATLEY GARVEY**, *Communications Specialist*
*Department of Entomology and Nematology*

*Western yellowjacket — note the black antennae.*

*European paper wasp — note the orange antennae.*

Western yellowjackets, nicknamed "meat bees" (as opposed to the "vegetarian honey bees") are often misidentified.

A recent visitor at a camp in the Sierra Nevada mountain range witnessed a large number of wasps and stinging behavior. They crowded around the picnic tables *(ah, meat!)* and sipped from soda cans *(ah, sugar!)* She wondered if they were yellowjackets or European paper wasps.

From the description and behavior: yellowjackets.

*"European paper wasps (Polistes dominula) are not scavengers,"* says Lynn Kimsey, director of the Bohart Museum of Entomology and a professor of entomology at UC Davis. *"They only take live insects, particularly caterpillars. Western yellowjackets, Vespula pensylvanica, are serious scavengers and are major pests in the Sierra and elsewhere. Their colonies are annual, which means that fertilized new queens must overwinter in protected places until it warms enough in the spring to begin new colonies. As the new colonies are building they need a lot of protein for their babies. The larger the colonies get the more they need."*

*"If many new queens survived the winter because temperatures were warmer and drier than usual then there will be many colonies to deal with, all competing for food. By late in the season the colonies go more into maintenance mode, needing a lot of sugar. They aren't feeding many babies, which need protein, and the large number of adults need sugar for fuel."*

*"At this point, control is largely useless,"* Kimsey says. *"Control measures need to be started in the mid to late spring and the best control method is the use of baited traps, not spraying. Also when colonies are found they need to be removed—this needs to be done at night. These wasps nest in cavities, mostly in the ground but also in attics, wall voids and hollow trees if available. The large number of stings suggests that a colony or colonies were nearby."*

*"So at this point it's best to hope for a long cold, wet winter,"* Kimsey says.

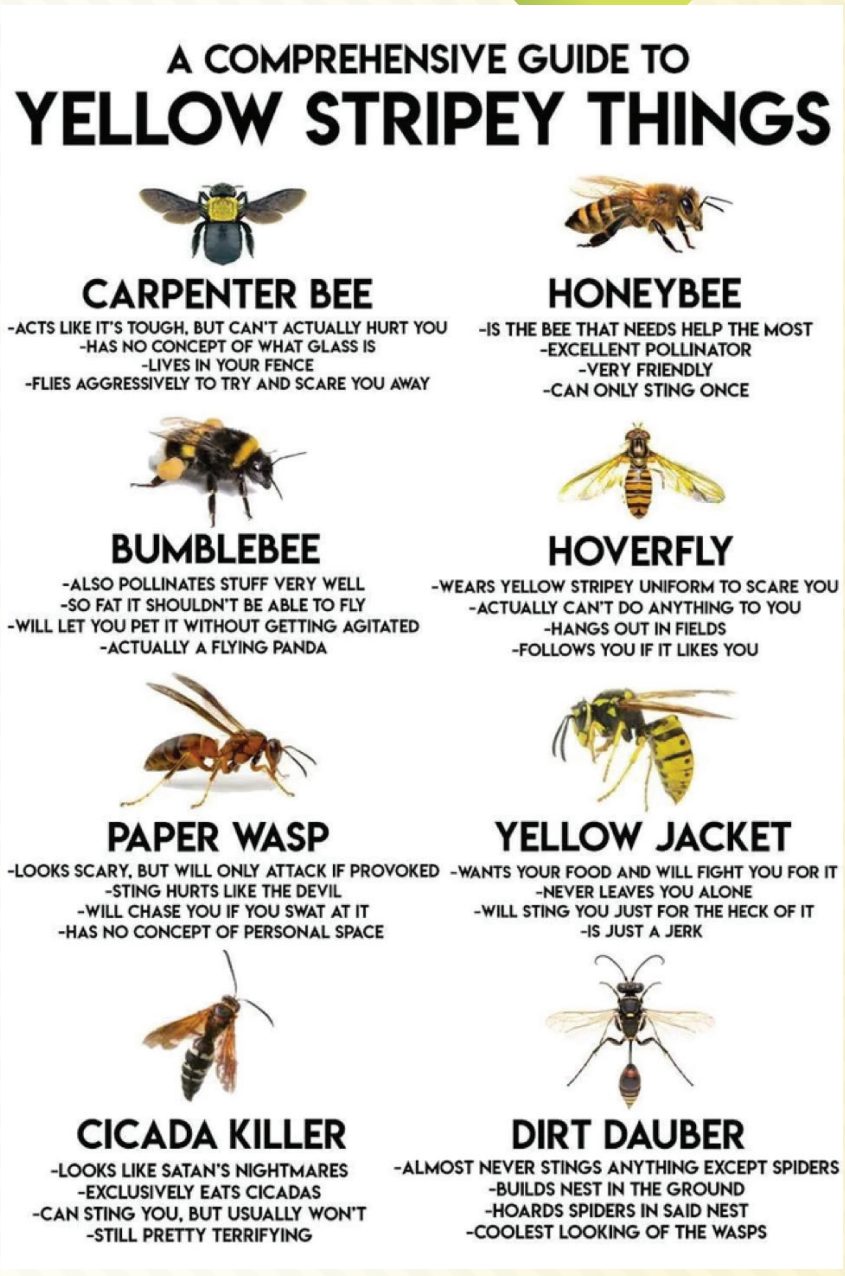
The UC Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program (UC IPM) provides a wealth of information on Western yellowjackets and paper wasps on its PestNote: *"In Western states there are two distinct types of social wasps—yellowjackets and paper wasps. Yellowjackets are by far the most troublesome group, especially ground-and cavity-nesting ones such as the western yellowjacket, which tend to defend their nests vigorously when disturbed. Defensive behavior increases as the season progresses and colony populations become larger while food becomes scarcer. In fall, foraging yellowjackets are primarily scavengers, and they start to show up at picnics and barbecues, around garbage cans, at dishes of dog or cat food placed outside, and where ripe or overripe fruit are accessible. At certain times and places, the number of scavenger wasps can be quite large."*

*"Paper wasps are much less defensive and rarely sting humans,"* according the to the UC IPM PestNote. *"They tend to shy away from human activity except when their nests are located near doors, windows, or other high-traffic areas."*

The UC IPM authors point out that *"Typically, previously mated, overwintering yellowjacket and paper wasp queens begin their nests in spring when the weather becomes warm. The queen emerges in late winter to early spring to feed and start a new nest. From spring to midsummer, nests are in the growth phase, and larvae require large amounts of protein. Workers forage mainly for protein at this time—usually other insects—and for some sugars. By late summer, however, the colonies grow more slowly or cease growth and require large amounts of sugar to maintain the queen and workers; foraging wasps are particularly interested in sweet things at this time. Normally, yellowjacket and paper wasp colonies live only one season. In very mild winters or in coastal California south of San Francisco, however, some yellowjacket colonies survive for several years and become quite large."*

UC IPM has posted an informative YouTube video, *"Distinguishing Between Yellowjackets, Wasps, and Look Alikes."* Look closely and you can see that those European paper wasps have distinctive orange antennae. Yellowjacket antennae are black.

Or, to put it another way: Yellowjacket antennae are black, like the Oakland Raiders' logo, and European paper wasp antennae are orange, like the logo of the San Francisco Giants.




# Pro-Pest® Roach & Crawling Insect Trap Has New Look!

**CONTRIBUTED BY *J. F. OAKES, LLC***

J. F. Oakes, LLC is pleased to announce, that the ever-popular Pro-Pest® Roach & Crawling Insect Trap, has a new look. The trap now has a light woodgrain finish, that will blend in with any décor or environment. No visible print on one side of trap for, discreet insect capture.

The new Pro-Pest® Roach & Crawling Insect Trap is pre-baited with an aromatic food attractant and is ready to use.

The Pro-Pest® Roach & Crawling Insect Trap is specifically designed for forced monitoring and initial clean out of roaches and other crawling insects.


**For more information, contact us at J. F. Oakes, LLC at 662-746-7276 or sales@jfoakes.com**

# THE IMPORTANCE OF IGRS FOR MOSQUITOES

ARTICLE FROM PCT MAGAZINE: *pctonline.com*

An effective pest control management program includes multiple lines of defense. While insect growth regulators, or IGRs, may not show an immediate effect on mosquito populations, when paired with an adulticide, they can be a key component in ongoing pest control. As the adulticide knocks down the existing mosquito population, IGRs keep those mosquitoes from reproducing by rendering them sterile.

***"The one thing that people should understand with IGRs is, it's a slow process, it doesn't speed up the reduction of pests,"*** said Jason Everitt, of Rottler Pest Solutions in St. Louis, Mo. ***"If you understand the biology and how it affects the pest and the stages of a pests life cycle you understand the timing more."***

Once a pest management professional understands that timing, IGRs become an important tool in their arsenal.

Brien Binford of Binford Insect Control in Bryan, Texas, first began using IGRs to break the life cycles of flea populations, but in the last eight to 10 years has used them to control other types of insects as well – including mosquitoes.

***"We made the decision to include IGRs due to the added effectiveness and the long-term control of certain insect problems that we have encountered over the years,"*** he said.

Everitt said he's been using IGRs since he first entered the pest management business 26 years ago. He first began using an IGR and adulticide combination to control fleas.

***"With fleas the number one process you have to stop is reproduction,"*** he said. ***"They lay many, many eggs a day."***

Now, Rottler Pest Solutions uses multiple types of IGRs – heightened synthesis inhibitors and juvenile hormones – as standard pest management practice. Everitt added they've found the juvenile inhibitor has been particularly effective on mosquitoes and cockroaches.

***"That just knocks out the developmental part of the life cycle and that does very well for us,"*** he said. ***"We're reducing reproductive adults who only make those populations go up."***

Plus, once the mosquito contacts the growth inhibitor, there is opportunity for IGR transfer. ***"It can give you a bigger area of treatment to neighboring properties,"*** he said.

Incorporating IGRs into your mosquito control program may nominally increase a PMP's chemical expenses, but for Everitt, the cost of adding an IGR to a treatment is more than offset by labor and operational savings.

***"You can reduce follow-ups by using a IGR. That's reducing our payroll cost,"*** he said. ***"(It also helps by) reducing maintenance to send a vehicle out there for the follow up."***

And with products that include both an adulticide and an IGR in one, technicians don't need to worry about mixing products for applications or having different materials available on their truck.

Binford began using a combination adulticide and IGR product about halfway through 2020, and he says he has noticed a reduction in callbacks.

***"We are really using it full throttle now and I have been impressed so far and especially in our monthly mosquito treatments,"*** he said. ***"We are getting compliments from our customers."***

***SOURCE:*** *www.pctonline.com/article/importance-igrs-mosquitoes*

# SWARMERS!

**BY MICHAEL MERCHANT, PH.D.**, *Professor and Extension Urban Entomologist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service – Dallas, TX*

**When large numbers of winged insects suddenly appear in the home, it may be the result of an insect mating swarm. When insects produce a swarm, also known as a reproductive flight, it is part of the seasonal activity of certain social insects, most importantly termites and ants. Normally insect swarms occur outdoors on a still, warm day. But if an ant or termite nest is close enough to a home, swarms may occur indoors.**

## What are swarmers?

Ants and termites are social insects with highly developed social organizations. Social insect societies are organized according to various castes, groups of physically distinct individuals with unique functions. The worker caste usually makes up the largest part of a social insect colony. Worker ants are those ants we see most often feeding at our tables and foraging outdoors for food for the colony. Worker termites are the small white insects we see when we break open a piece of decaying wood. All workers are female in the social insect world.

Another important caste for social insects is the reproductive caste. The reproductive caste consists of both males and females. At certain seasons of the year ant and termite colonies produce many such reproductives. These include the "kings" and "queens" of future colonies. Unmated insects are called pre-reproductives and usually possess wings prior to leaving the colony. Pre-reproductives remain inside the nest for varying periods of times–sometimes for several months–waiting for the proper signals to leave the nest in search of new mates. When they emerge from the nest in large numbers they are said to swarm. The pre-reproductives are called swarmers at this time.

## Why do insects swarm?

Why the bother? Why do insects leave their colony to mate? It seems like it would be easier and safer to partner with fellow nest mates and avoid the danger of leaving a secure nest. The answer seems to be that nature programs termites and ants with this behavior to to ensure better genetic mixing between colonies. Genetic mixing helps a species remain strong and better able to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

An interesting thing about swarming is that it typically occurs simultaneously among colonies in the same area. With no direct communication between different colonies, ants and termites seem to know when other colonies of the same species are going to send out potential mates, and time their swarms accordingly. Swarming is often triggered by one or more environmental clues such as temperature, wind speed, relative humidity and day length. Fire ants, for example, send out swarmers in the spring when the relative humidity is high and the wind speed is low. By using identical environmental cues to trigger swarming, ants and termite colonies increase the chance that their reproductives will encounter swarmers from other colonies of the same species.

## Should I be concerned?

When you find numerous swarming ants inside your home, it means there is an ant nest either inside, underneath or very close to the structure. In most cases, if worker ants have not previously been a problem inside the home, the presence of swarming ants indoors should not be a cause for concern. Swarming typically lasts for only one or just a few days. This, and the fact that reproductive flights only occur once to a few times a year, means that a vacuum cleaner, or one-time use of an indoor flying insect spray, is often all that is needed to solve the problem.

If you see no other evidence of ants other than occasional swarmers, then no further control may be needed. On the other hand, swarming ants may be evidence of an undesirable infestation. Pharaoh ants and carpenter ants are two species that can become chronic pests in a home or other structure. If a home has an infestation of either of these species, chances are that worker ants will be continuously present indoors, and may require treatment.

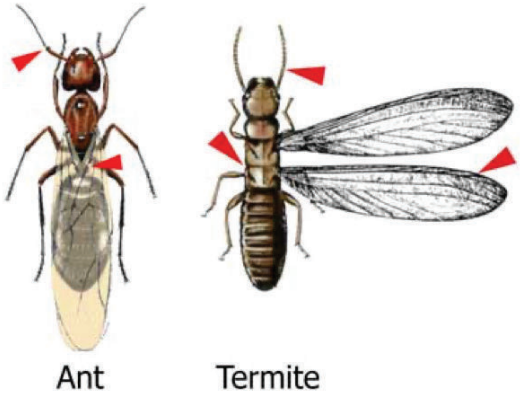
Swarming fire ants indoors usually indicate an outdoor nest adjacent to the building foundation. If fire ants swarm indoors, locate and treat the outdoor mound with a low-odor insecticide. Failure to treat fire ants that are nesting close to your house may result in mass invasions of fire ant workers, especially during the hot summer months.

Having termites swarm in your home is an almost sure indication of a termite infestation. Unless it's apparent that the termite entered through an outdoor window, you should contact a termite control professional. Save any specimens you discover for a professional to examine. The best way to preserve a specimen is to place it in a crush-proof container in alcohol (rubbing

alcohol is fine). Make a note of the date and which room it was collected from. This information will help a pest control professional inspect your home more efficiently. Many suspected termite infestations turn out, on close inspection, to be some other insect. If you find your home infested it is best to work with a professional termite or pest control company to eliminate the problem.

## Distinguishing ants and termites

Fortunately termite and ant swarmers are relatively easy to identify.




*Ant swarmers are distinguished from termites by their pinched waists and elbowed antennae. Swarmers may or may not have wings.*

Termites are recognized by their dark, straight sided bodies and long, equal-length wings. Ant swarmers have distinctly pinched waists (the joint between thorax and abdomen) and the four wings are unequal in length (two long and two relatively short). Ant antennae also bend sharply in the middle, whereas termite antennae are flexible throughout their length. Both ants and termites are relatively small, from 3/16 inch for the smaller ants and termites to 3/8 inch for the larger ants. Ant swarmers are usually larger than the worker ants from the same colony.

Both ants and termites can lose their wings shortly after emergence, so it is common to find reproductive ants and termites without wings.

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# SELL, SELL, SELL

ARTICLE FROM PCT MAGAZINE: *pctonline.com*

*Anne Nagro*

**Pest management companies — especially smaller ones — need a strategic sales program if they want to grow post pandemic. Here, PMPs share strategies that work for them — strategies that can work for your firm too.**

Last year, residential pest control saw record growth. Phones rang, online inquiries poured in and, for many pest management professionals, it was a race to keep up. This year, commercial sales are on the rise as businesses hit hard during the pandemic have reopened.

Unfortunately, banner sales in a post-pandemic world are not a sure thing. In fact, pest control companies without a strong sales strategy may lose out to more sophisticated competitors.

Companies with revenue of $500,000 to $800,000 often have no idea how to develop a sales team, nor do they necessarily want to, says Kevin Pass, who founded Pass Pest Control in Newburgh, Ind., after selling Action Pest Control, which he built into a $12 million company.

"At some point, if you want to grow past that million-dollar mark, you have to have a sales focus," says Pass.

Even at smaller companies, which might not have the revenue yet to support hiring salespeople, the sales function cannot be overlooked or left to chance.

"If you don't market your business properly and don't develop a powerful sales program, you're going to be one of those 82 percent of small businesses that doesn't make it to the end of the third year because they didn't have enough customers and enough revenue and they went broke," says Hal Coleman, a sales and marketing consultant who ran his own pest management company for 18 years.

Of course, it's not wise to push sales without also scaling operations to accommodate the increased workload. The two must go hand-in-hand. (See below.) PMPs with strong sales programs shared with PCT strategies that work for their organizations:

## ▶ How to Scale the Business for Sales

"Growing quickly and finding scale operationally is a significant challenge," says Vess Pearson, Aptive CEO.

In fact, the customer experience can suffer if you focus on sales without scaling systems like company culture, SOPs and workforce development to support that growth.

Pearson says company leaders must recognize the level of growth they can afford. "They really have to understand their cash flow, because you can bankrupt your company by selling really, really well," explains Pearson.

Great salespeople earn a good living, and if the company grows too fast, it may not be able to afford to pay commissions due to cash flow restrictions.

In addition, you may need to secure a source of funding to cover operational expenses if the goal is to grow fast. "If you want explosive growth like Aptive, you're going to need to be funded very, very well," says Pearson.

## INSIDE SALES

Inside salespeople handle leads that come in by phone, email and text.

Green Pest Solutions in West Chester, Pa., has three inside sales representatives who manage inbound leads. Their goal is to quickly close the sale, schedule the initial service visit and capture payment in one call. This generally takes less than 10 minutes, says Alex Wolfington, the company's sales vice president.

Salespeople work from a presentation that sets the company apart from competitors. It highlights what Green Pest Solutions can provide the potential client and the benefits of its recurring general pest program (versus a one-time fix).

By providing a quote immediately instead of waiting for an inspection, salespeople reduce the likelihood that customers will shop around. And immediately scheduling that first service visit eliminates buyer's remorse, resulting in fewer cancellations, says Wolfington.

Software, websites (Zillow, Google Maps) and existing customer data make it possible to accurately quote some types of general pest control, such as exterior perimeter services, without an inspection.

It's important to "be very knowledgeable of what your competition is charging for their services," adds Wolfington, who consistently updates how salespeople are evaluated (key performance indicators) and adjusts selling practices to improve the customer experience.

"Sales teams should always be selling, and customer service teams should always be meeting the needs of our customers and supporting the company," Wolfington explains.

CSRs currently handle inbound leads at Rose Pest Solutions, based in Troy, Mich., but the company may switch to inside sales reps to reduce the time between receiving a residential service lead and the initial service visit. "The shorter you can make that cycle, the better off the results," says Bill Welsh, the company's vice president of sales and regional manager in Kalamazoo, Mich.

### ▶ Why You Need a Practiced Sales Presentation

Many PMPs never sell pest control jobs the same way twice. Some days they're really successful; other days they can't sell a thing.

"They're just winging it. Winging it is a terrible thing to do in sales," says Hal Coleman, sales and marketing consultant. This is especially true considering the high cost of leads.

It's far more effective to work from a proven, scripted sales presentation. This doesn't mean reading a rigid telemarketing script; it does mean having a specific framework to lead prospects through the sales process to closing.

"It's words and phrases and commands and suggestions in the proper psychological sequence that leads buyers right down the ladder to the bottom floor where the contract is," explains Coleman.

Inbound leads, for instance, should be a done deal. "It's just up to you to not screw it up. But a lot of time we do screw it up because we don't understand where (customers) are in the sales process," says Coleman. We give conflicting signals and express conflicting values, and as a result, the customer decides to shop around.

He urges PMPs to read sales books and to constantly refine and practice their presentations, so they sound authentic and natural while adhering to a proven framework. This ensures nothing is left to chance and you're prepared for every sales situation.

## OUTSIDE SALES

Selling jobs over the phone or email works for some general pest services; others require an in-person inspection to determine conducive conditions and to provide an accurate quote. Examples are bed bug, wildlife and termite work.

Inside sales, or customer service representatives, turn these leads over to outside salespeople (sometimes called sales inspectors), who conduct site visits and typically close the sale at the customer's door.

Outside salespeople also sell commercial work. Some companies have separate commercial sales teams, since these sales take longer to complete. Prospects typically have a pest control provider already, so the task is to get them to cancel their current provider and switch over.

"You're not going to build your business commercially by waiting for them to call you. You've got to go out and get them," says Welsh, Rose Pest Solutions.

This often starts with cold-calling prospects. The commercial salespeople at Action Pest Control "were cold-calling commandos," recalls Pass. Your company's reputation influences how likely prospects will listen to your sales presentation.

The goal is to build a long-term relationship with decision makers, says Jeff Dunn, sales leader at Northwest Exterminating, a Rollins company in Marietta, Ga. When key procurement and environmental services personnel move to other facilities, "oftentimes they take us with them," he says.

### ▶ How to Set Your Company Apart

Before undertaking any sales initiative, you must clearly define why someone should do business with you instead of your competitors, says marketing and sales consultant Hal Colman.

"You need to totally set your company apart from everybody else," he says. When customers compare apples to apples, they'll choose the least expensive option. That's why you want to be the orange, which not only looks, tastes, smells and feels different, but also better, Coleman explains. Ultimately, consumers will pay more for better.

When you can successfully compare apples to oranges, you're ready to spend money on marketing and you've got something to tell people in your oral sales presentation.

But being an orange is more than saying you're a professional, family-owned business that treats customers well and knows how to eliminate pests. That's what every company says.

"There's no pest control company in your community that couldn't tell people exactly the same thing," Coleman cautions.

## REFERRAL SALES

Referrals are key to any sales process. When a potential customer is referred to your company by a trusted source, ears and wallets open more readily. Every employee can develop referral leads, regardless of who is responsible for sales.

*READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE:* *http://magazine.pctonline.com/article/november-2021/sell-sell-sell.aspx*

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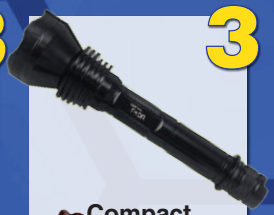
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