

# Carpenter Ants

Carpenter ants are quite common in Western, NY especially in communities with lots of mature trees and extensive exterior landscaping. Carpenter ants forage and invade homes in search of food, moisture, warmth, and shelter.



## What is the growth and development cycle of Carpenter Ants?

Carpenter ants nest in both indoor and outdoor colonies. They are very social insects. After mating, the male dies and the single fertilized queen ant finds a suitable nesting place to lay eggs and begin a new colony. The medium and minor workers carry out most of the work inside and outside the nest including excavating and caring for the eggs, larvae, and pupae and foraging for and bringing food and moisture back to the nest. The workers of satellite colonies move readily between their nest and the parent colony.

## What do Carpenter Ants eat?

Outdoors, they eat honeydew (secreted by aphids), juices from ripe fruit, and other insects. Indoors they tend to eat sweets, meats, cake, grease, and moist kitchen waste.

## Where does the sawdust come from?

You may find softened wood or sawdust due to Carpenter Ants burrowing or tunneling. They often carry and dump the excavated wood outside.

## Where do they nest?

Carpenter Ants establish nests in naturally occurring voids. They also excavate spaces in wood that has been softened by moisture and wood rot. Outside, nests are typically located in old tree stumps, rotting fence posts, landscaping timbers, dead portions of standing trees, and under stones or fallen logs. Indoors, nests may be found in wall voids, under insulation, inside hollow doors, and in wood that has been softened by a moisture condition.

## Why is it difficult to find nesting sites?

Nests are usually hidden in walls, which make it difficult to find them. Furthermore, most ants are active during the night from dusk until dawn.

## How extensive is damage to the wood?

The extent and potential damage to a home depends on how many nests are actually present and how long the infestation has been active. Often, most of the damage is caused by wood rot due to an excessive moisture condition, not the carpenter ants.

## **We never had Carpenter Ants before. Why do we have them now?**

They are seen in the home especially from April through June may actually be nesting outdoors and are just foraging inside in search of the resources they need. Carpenter ants are known to travel up to 100 yards, even from neighboring properties, in search of food, moisture, warmth, and shelter.

## **What can be done to prevent them from reoccurring?**

- Seal cracks in foundation
- Replace rotted window frames
- Ventilate attics and crawl spaces
- Replace rotted posts and pillars
- Cut back tree branches
- Remove dead stumps
- Clean clogged gutters
- Move woodpiles away from the house
- Repair roof leaks
- Seal around chimneys
- Repair damaged flashing

## **Treatment Options**

**Exterior Perimeter Treatment:** Apply a liquid spray product in a band about three feet out and three feet up on the foundation wall. Treat where the ground meets the foundation wall and up under the lower edge of the siding. We also treat around window and door casings, soffits and utility line openings.

**Interior Void Treatment:** If you suspect a carpenter ant nest is in a wall or other hollow space you can inject an insecticide dust or pressurized aerosol into the space. Often times you can take advantage of natural openings such as around electrical outlets, phone lines, and ducts.

**Baiting:** Baits work by combining an attractive food source with a slow-acting toxicant. Place the bait only in areas where activity has been seen or is strongly suspected. After offering the bait, monitor it over 24 hours for feeding activity. Never apply insecticides on or around baits because this will prevent feeding and render baits useless. Baits may be used inside or outside.