

A SUPPLEMENT TO

# PMP

Pest Management  
Professional

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# Identification is Job One

2024 ANT  
MANAGEMENT  
SUPPLEMENT

A NORTH COAST MEDIA PUBLICATION

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# Taming the tramp ant

Many of the most difficult ants pest management professionals (PMPs) face are non-native, invasive ants. One category that can be particularly troublesome is the group known as “tramp ants.” Tramp ant definitions can vary, but in general, these ants are non-native — although native odorous house ants (*Tapinoma sessile*, or OHA) are considered tramp ants. Tramp ants also have multiple queens, multiple nests, and often are not aggressive to other colonies of the same species.

Essentially, tramp ants are among the most difficult ants to control — think pharaoh (*Monomorium pharaonis*), Argentine (*Linepithema humile*), crazy (*Paratrechina longicornis*), and red imported fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*, or RIFA), among others. In areas where these ants become established, they often push out less-troublesome native ants; they can even create problematic ecosystem shifts.

## Skilled survivalists

Once these non-native ants get introduced into an area, they often are able to establish in regions with favorable climates. Non-native ants now comprise six of the Top 10 most common ant species encountered in the United States<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, even if these ants are detected early, eradication efforts often fail.

RIFA is essentially the poster child of failed eradication efforts. Although the federal government had a wide-scale eradication program in place for decades, we now understand RIFA biology — and realize eradication is not a realistic goal. Thus, PMPs play an integral role in not only alleviating customer concerns regarding ants, but also helping to minimize the impact non-native ants may have in an area.

## Your partner in ant control

Control Solutions Inc. (CSI) offers a variety of products and formulations for managing tough ant problems. One of the most powerful products on the market for ant control is CSI’s proprietary product, Fuse. This formulation contains two nonrepellent active ingredients, imidacloprid and fipronil, and is an

excellent choice for managing tramp ants around perimeters of structures. Using Fuse for perimeter pest control takes outdoor preventive and curative treatments for multiple structure-invading pests to the next level, while minimizing callbacks for stubborn ant issues.

For PMPs who operate in areas where RIFA populations persist, Doxem Plus Fire Ant Bait is an excellent option. Its flexible label allows for both broadcast and mound applications.

CSI is committed to being a leading industry partner and developing innovative products to manage pests that pose a threat to food, health and property. We strive to provide practical solutions that optimize control and simplify pest management. As always, at CSI, our mission is to develop and deliver *innovation you can apply*.

<sup>1</sup> Booher, D.B., Gotelli, N.J., Nelsen, N.P., Ohyama, L., Deyrup, M., Moreau, C.S., and Suarez, A.V. (2023). “Six decades of museum collections reveal disruption of native ant assemblages by introduced species.” *Current Biology*, 33(10), 2088-2094. DOI.org/10.1016/j.cub.2023.03.044.




BY DR. BRITTANY CAMPBELL, BCE  
Technical Services Manager,  
Control Solutions Inc. (CSI)



# Identification is Job One

Success in ant control starts with accurate species identification

By Diane Sofranec | PMP Senior Editor



An Argentine ant (*Linepithema humile*) raids a nest of dead baby ghost spiders (*Anyphaenidae*) in a leaf.

**T**he first step on the road to successful ant control is correctly identifying the species.

“Do not treat without knowing what you are treating for; an ant is not just another ant,” says Nate Heider, national operations director at Spidexx Pest Control in Aurora, Ill. “Becoming an expert in identifying the various types of ants in your area is crucial to your success with customers.”

Pest management professionals (PMPs) who offer ant management services and shared their expertise in *Pest Management Professional’s (PMP’s)* 2024 Ant Management Survey said taking the time to thoroughly learn about ant species will give you the knowledge you need to succeed. “Your expertise will not only enhance your effectiveness, but also boost your confidence and customer satisfaction,” Heider adds.

“Ants vary widely,” says Denise Trad-Wartan, ACE, CEO, Trad’s Pest Control, Jacksonville, Fla. “The correct ID gives us the information we need to set up a control strategy.”

Field observation offers helpful information, including an ant’s color, whether it is polymorphic or monomorphic, or whether trailing is direct or erratic, she explains. Examining the ant under a microscope or loupe provides a correct ID, which

in turn exposes information about the potential colony size and location(s), queen(s), node(s) and the type of bait the species prefers.

“Some ants are sweet feeders, others are protein feeders, and some ants are finicky and change their preferences,” Trad-Wartan says. “Generally speaking, if we can get the ants to take the bait, we can gain control. So, choosing the bait with the correct matrix is important.”

Don’t even think about skipping this step, say the PMPs who answered the survey, including Natasha Wright, BCE, technical director of Braman Termite and Pest Elimination in Agawam, Mass. She says treating all species the same will lead to a PMP’s downfall.

“For a while, you might get away with suppressing ant problems with your standard arsenal of products,” she explains. “One day, though, you may scatter pharaoh ants and their numerous queens all over the countryside and to the moon, and the only person you’ll have to blame is yourself for the nightmare you’ve created.”

## Reliable resources

Fortunately, several tools are available to aid in an accurate identification, including:

► **Field guides** feature extensive information on species, including behavior, biology and control tools and techniques. The National Pest Management

*Continued on page AM6*



Nate Heider



Denise Trad-Wartan



Natasha Wright

# 2024 ANT MANAGEMENT SUPPLEMENT

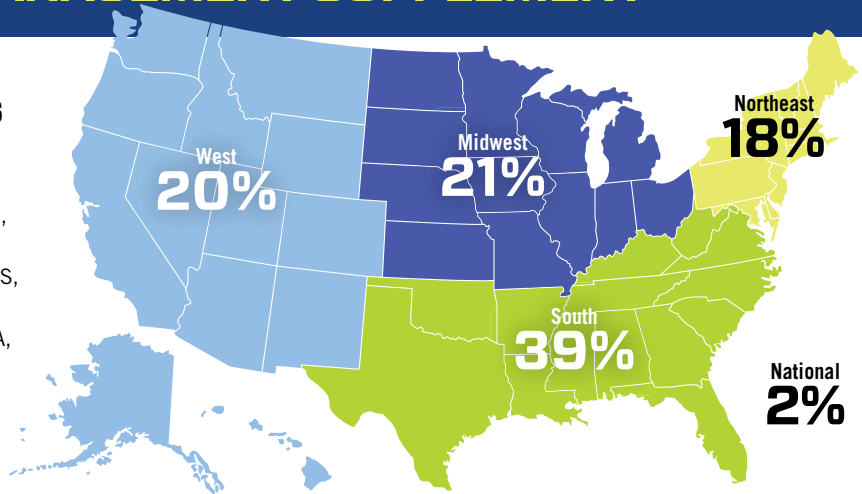
## Area of Operations

**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)



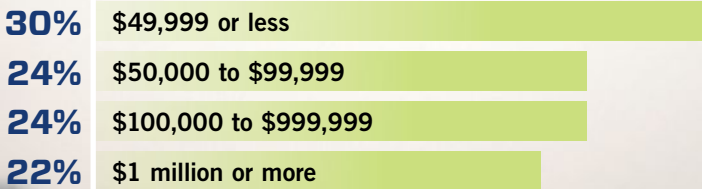
# ANT MANAGEMENT SURVEY

SOURCE: PMP ONLINE SURVEY CONDUCTED MAY 2024

## Projected 2024 Total Revenue



## Projected 2024 Ant Management Revenue



## Top 5 Pest Ants by Number of Jobs Generated

**1**  
Odorous house ants  
(*Tapinoma sessile*)



**2**  
Carpenter ants  
(*Camponotus* spp.)



**3**  
Pavement ants  
(*Tetramorium caespitum*)



**4**  
Little black ants  
(*Monomorium minimum*)



**5**  
Fire ants  
(*Solenopsis* spp.)



### Ant Management Revenue by Structure Type



Residential



Commercial



Government/  
Municipal

25% or less of ant management revenue

27%

67%

95%

26% to 50% of ant management revenue

22%

24%

3%

51% or more of ant management revenue

51%

9%

2%

### Top 5 Pest Ants by Number of Callbacks Generated

**1** Odorous house ants  
(*Tapinoma sessile*)



**2** Carpenter ants  
(*Camponotus* spp.)



**3** Fire ants  
(*Solenopsis* spp.)



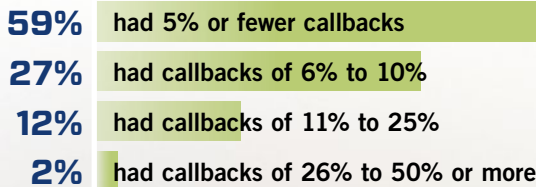
**4** Little black ants  
(*Monomorium minimum*)



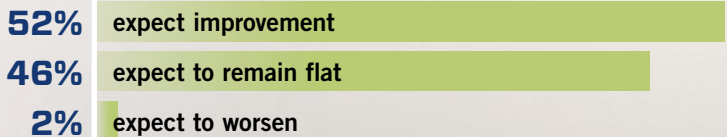
**5** Pavement ants  
(*Tetramorium caespitum*)



### Callback percentage on new ant treatments in 2023



### Projected 2024 callback rate compared with 2023



### Top opportunities to growing ant management revenue

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

### Top obstacles to growing ant management revenue

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

GETTY IMAGES: MATT YOUNG (ANTS); DENYS (MAP); BROWNDOGSTUDIOS (BUILDINGS); FOTOTRIPS (LITTLE BLACK ANTS) / ISTOCK / BETTY IMAGES PLUS; ANT PHOTOS; © GENE WHITE (CARPENTER, ODOROUS, PAVEMENT, FIRE ANTS).

Continued from page AM3

Association (NPMA) offers the NPMA Field Guide Pro app — based on its book by the same name — that technicians can use to identify pests using their smartphones or tablets.

► **Dichotomous keys** are a series of statements based on observations with two choices in each step that eventually will lead to a correct identification. PMPs consider one characteristic at a time and compare and contrast it with the pest species they are trying to identify.

► **Online resources** such as AntWiki and insect identification tools developed and supported by university entomology departments, state extension offices and government entities, offer good starting points when seeking a correct ID.

Of course, PMPs also have long relied on equipment to see the details on an ant that ultimately lead to a positive identification. “Invest in a microscope or a powerful hand lens and become familiar with looking at nodes and other miniscule features,” advises Wright.

All is not lost if you’re stuck and unsure, however. Entomologists affiliated with universities, county extension offices, and pest control product manufacturers and distributors can help you confirm ant species.

Identification is imperative when targeting ants because treatment depends on food preferences and habitats. Successful ant control happens when you use the appropriate product for the species. In addition, it’s important to remember the label is the law.

“Some ant species are excluded from the label of many ant baits and insecticides, so make sure you have products to treat those species,” Wright says.

## Realistic expectations

An integrated pest management (IPM) approach is ideal, says



Greg Kelly

Greg Kelly, operator of Green Kastle in Sesser, Ill., because a multi-pronged inspection and treatment protocol helps ensure success. He recommends PMPs thoroughly inspect areas next to foundations;

move leaves, organic debris, bricks, wood scraps, etc., when looking for nests; and treat the source directly every time, if possible. If you’re a longtime pest control veteran, pass on your valuable experience to your colleagues.

Your customers may have valuable observations to share, so communicate openly with them. Ask questions about what they saw, where they saw it and when they saw it. Remember the oft-repeated recommendation of *PMP Hall of Famer* (Class of 2002) Dr. Austin Frishman, BCE-Emeritus: “Ask the children, as they are likely paying keen attention to what the ants are doing.”

“Setting realistic expectations with your customers about the ant control process and expected outcomes will save you time and energy down the road,” Heider says. “This approach ensures transparency and builds trust, leading to smoother interactions and more satisfied customers.”

Rick Roseberger, service supervisor for Thomas Pest Services in Schenectady, N.Y., says it’s important to set expectations before and after treatment applications because customers may see an increase in ant activity. In addition, explain how they can help you eliminate future infestations.

“An IPM approach will set up the customer for potential work that needs to be done to reduce conducive conditions,” he says, offering overgrown shrubs touching a roofline as an example. “Removing the natural bridges leading into a home is just as important as any chemical treatment, because the ants can bypass your treatment applications to get into the home.”

Communication shouldn’t end there, however. “After



Rick Roseberger

treatments are made, relaying what to expect is critical to reduce callbacks and avoid having unhappy customers,” Roseberger says. “PMPs and their customers need to have a strong, professional bond to accomplish the goal of a reduction in pest activity.”

## Reassure customers

Severe infestations require extra attention, and not just for the ants. Customers may need reassurance your treatment will eliminate the pests, even if it will take time.

“Almost everyone has dealt with ants, so there are endless amounts of potential customers,” says Cragoe Pest Services President David Cragoe, BCE, PCA, of Moorpark, Calif. “Some wait until infestations are

out of control, but it's a good opportunity to communicate with customers about not letting that happen next year."

Kelly advises PMPs to always follow up and communicate with customers and establish expectations from the start. "A severe ant infestation can take a few weeks to disappear after treatment," he adds. "A simple phone call between visits shows your concern and provides valuable feedback."

Roseberger agrees. "PMPs should never take the severity of the situation lightly, as this could lead to failure," he says. "All tactics need to be deployed to ensure confidence in yourself as well as maintain the confidence of your customers to achieve their expectations that you — as a PMP — created."

Budding colonies, satellite colonies, deforestation and displacement from new housing developments have placed pest pressure on many homes. "Depending on how strong the pheromone trails are around the property, it is always good to stay sharp, take your time and be one step ahead of nature," Roseberger adds.

"Successful ant management should be a key component of any PMP's services as today's excellent array of chemical control choices makes it relatively easy to be effective," says Cragoe. "Your product suppliers and manufacturer representatives are excellent resources for trouble accounts."

Aaron Ross, owner of Low Country Pest Control of Walterboro, S.C., says some customers show an interest in

the control solutions and techniques used, while others only want the issue resolved.

"For the customers who show even the least bit of concern for a solution our technicians offer, proper education communicated in an effective way generally will ease their minds," Ross says. "Once a treatment plan is set in place and explained to customers, with proper expectations of their results, generally there are no other issues or concerns."

Ross stresses educating customers is key because "we will never be able to completely rid every place of all insect issues."

### Revenue builder

Despite the challenges PMPs may encounter when offering ant management services, it's worth the effort, according to those who answered *PMP's* 2024 Ant Management Survey.

"Train technicians to become familiar with ant biology and behavioral habits," says Roseberger. "Communicate to customers all aspects of the work to be performed."

Customer satisfaction is what matters most, of course. "Successful ant management often leads to other jobs once a relationship with the customer is established," Ross concludes. "Ant management services can provide great revenue as well." **PMP**

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Aaron Ross



David Cragoe

## Declaring victory over persistent ant problems

*Pest Management Professional* asked survey respondents to share the details about the largest ant infestations they battled. Read on for two of these war stories — with more details about each online at **MyPMP.net**.

### Dying in a hot tub

I've found pavement ant (*Tetramorium caespitum*) nests in BBQ grills, chairs, tables and other weird spots, but this was the most extreme location by far.

The backyard hot tub, which had been broken for years, was right below the deck where the customer was finding ants.

We lifted the tub cover to find an incredibly huge colony under the cover and inside the hot tub. I believe this issue must have been going on for more than a year.

— *Michael Broder, President, BHB Pest Elimination, Wallington, N.J.*



Michael Broder

### Invasion of the ghost ants

Ghost ants (*Tapinoma melanocephalum*) were found in several rooms of a home. The ants were trailing from an unkempt neighboring property, but there were also a few nests on the homeowner's property and in wall voids.

After months of treatment, there were still ghost ants all over the house. We finally learned the homeowner was using over-the-counter repellents, so the situation was kind of a mess.

We asked her to clean up all yard debris, put away the all-day pet buffet and refrain from spraying her over-the-counter products — and she is still a customer today.

— *Denise Trad-Wartan, ACE, CEO, Trad's Pest Control, Jacksonville, Fla.*