



BASIC BAITING FOR INDOOR ANTS

What you should already know about using ant baits

An effective ant bait should not be repellent to the ants. Many ants are very sensitive to pesticides and will quickly break up and move their colonies if there is anything repellent in the vicinity. The ant bait should be attractive only to the target ant (or closely related ants.) an effective ant bait should have delayed toxicity. In other words, it's important that the ants have time to feed on the bait, recruit other ants to the food source, and carry the bait back to the colony before they die from the bait's effects. Delayed toxicity can sometimes be frustrating for the technician and the customer who like to see immediate results. It's important that the customer understands that the best and most permanent control will come slowly.

An ant bait is made up of an active ingredient (toxicant or pesticide) mixed with a food ingredient. Ant baits are now available in several different formulations with different packaging. There are gel baits applied by tube or with a "gun" applicator, containerized bait stations, granular baits, and liquid baits.

Sometimes indoor ants are not feeding inside at all but are instead foraging for water. A liquid bait should work well in this case. If you're using granular baits for small ants, make sure the granules are small enough that the ants can pick them up to carry them back to the colony. If you use gel baits, don't apply them inside electrical equipment or to surfaces that can get hot. Don't apply gel baits to fabrics, porous surfaces, surfaces that have been recently sprayed with insecticides, or surfaces where food is prepared.

Many ant baits contain insect growth regulators (IGRs) as the active ingredient. IGRs affect the development of immature ants by killing them directly, or by affecting egg production by the queen, or by preventing the development of worker ants. Since IGRs do not kill adult worker ants, the baits are spread through the colony to affect development of immature ants instead.

Probably the toughest problem in baiting ants is getting the carbohydrate/protein food preference right. Some ants prefer sweets, others prefer proteins and fats, and many ants will switch from one food to the other with little warning. The food preference switch is often seasonal and requires experimenting on the part of the applicator. When ants start rejecting your bait, it's time to try a different food type. Prebaiting with different nontoxic food baits before you begin the actual toxic baiting programme can save effort (and product) in the long run.

Prebaiting- Prebaiting (also called survey baiting) not only gives you an idea of what the ants are feeding on, it also helps pinpoint sites of the greatest feeding activity which tells you where to place your toxic baits. Prebaiting can also help you track ants back to their nest site. To prebait, place nontoxic food baits on strips of masking tape or in sections of plastic straws. Try several different foods to see which one is preferred. Two good test prebaits are apple jam (sweet) and peanut butter (protein). Once you've discovered what the ants are feeding on in the account, eliminate those food sources so that you will get good acceptance of your toxic bait.

The Baiting Programme- hopefully, as a result of your prebaiting, you now have an idea of the food that the ants prefer and you have located some prime feeding sites, ant trails, and maybe even points of entry. Place your toxic baits directly on trails when possible since some ants will not wander off of their trails. Place baits along edges where ants trail such as counter edges, door moldings, wall/floor joints, window frames and along baseboards. Also place baits near water sources such as sinks, toilets, and potted plants. Bait near heat sources like light fixtures, electrical boxes, heat ducts, hot water heaters, and appliances. Place small amounts of bait in lots of sites. Leave enough bait to last until your next service visit. Remember that toxic bait is food-based and spoiled bait can actually repel ants. Some baits without preservatives will need to be replaced weekly. Once you've discovered the most active feeding sites, concentrate your bait placements in these areas. Discontinue baiting sites that have had no activity. Many indoor ant problems originate outdoors. So look for nest sites outside and bait these areas too. Some pco's routinely place bait around the perimeter of structures to draw ants away before they can enter the building. Some baits, though, do not have a long active life when exposed to light and other outdoor conditions.

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