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## The Pest Bulletin

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**McKINZIE PEST CONTROL**  
A MCKINZIE INC. COMPANY

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# Ants Are On The Move!

This is a great time of year to be an ant. Food is plentiful during the spring and summer, and the colonies rapidly grow in size as the queen ants become virtual egg-laying machines. This all means more human encounters with these pests, as they come into our yards and then find their way indoors.

It often seems that ants appear magically, as if from nowhere, but in fact their small size allows their many scouts to crawl through the tiniest of cracks and reappear indoors. And very few get lost! Once they have found food, moisture, or a suitable nesting spot



indoors, they lay down a chemical trail that other ants easily follow.

Soon hundreds or thousands of foraging ants find the trail, and it quickly becomes an **"ant super highway."**

Ants unfortunately also are very good at multiplying the number of colonies in an area. They simply send out winged, fully reproductive female and male ants, and these start new nests. For many species of ants it is even easier than that to start new

colonies—if there is more than one queen in a crowded nest, part of the group simply leaves and forms a new colony, a process called 'budding'.

You should always diligently eliminate food and moisture that might attract ants. McKinzie's regular treatments are what really prevent ant problems. We are the *Area Ant Specialists*—experts at controlling even difficult ant problems. Call us if you, or someone you know, is having problems with these all-too-common pests.

## Termite Damage is Often Hidden



Like many criminals, termites operate mostly in the dark, hidden from view. Termites tunnel **INSIDE**

wood, away from light and drying air, rather than on the surface. Because of this, they often remain unnoticed by homeowners for years while they gradually weaken a wooden structure.

Termites also work unnoticed and uncontrolled because the common subterranean termites attack a structure directly from their already hidden colonies in the soil. They find their way into an unprotected home in a variety of ways. Concrete seems impenetrable, but in fact as a concrete foundation and piers age they develop cracks that termites can easily crawl through. Termites can crawl through a tiny crack in cement **as small as 1/64 of an inch**

**wide**, directly into wood—all well hidden from view!

In addition to cracks, concrete has other hidden "termite highways". Holes for electrical conduits and plumbing, as well as expansion joints, are often used by these pests to enter a structure. Even porches made of concrete often have a dirt fill underneath that piles soil right up to various cracks and openings. Termites can travel through such cracks directly to structural wood, completely hidden from view.

Because termites use these and other hidden avenues to enter a structure, they often stay hidden for years while they are causing damage. Our professional termite services are a wise investment that can help detect and control termite and other wood-destroying pests, protecting your property from extensive damage.

## Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Pet food left out overnight invites trouble with pests, so remove it nightly. Raccoons, rodents, and many insect pests such as cockroaches and ants, quickly learn where to look for food, and will visit that spot each night.



## Studies: Ladybugs Cause Allergies



Those new Asian lady beetles that are plaguing homes all over the country are much more than just a major nuisance. New studies, reported at the March meeting of the *American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology*, confirm that allergies to ladybugs are more common than previously thought.

The Asian lady beetle is the official name, but most people refer to them as ladybugs. This particular species was brought into the country around 1980 to help control agricultural pests. Since then they have become serious household pests and are now widespread around the country. They come into homes in the late summer and fall, looking for a protected place to spend the winter, and cause most problems from fall into spring.

One study has found an allergic reaction to ladybugs is nearly as common as allergies to cats or cockroaches. In 1,400 skin prick tests, one physician found 21% showed sensitivity to ladybugs, 24% to cats, 27% to cockroaches, and 40% to dust mites.

In another study of people whose homes had large infestations of ladybugs, 19% reported allergy symptoms when they came into direct contact with the insects, and 31% reported using more allergy medications during ladybug infestations.

People with allergies can be tested by an allergist to help determine the cause. If you, or a family member, has allergies that may be related to these or other insects, regular pest control service is very important, and additional treatments may need to be made in the late summer or early fall to help prevent Asian lady beetles from coming indoors.

## Removing Fly Specks

Here's a tip to make your cleaning go faster and easier.

Clean fly specks from windows using a solution of two tablespoons of vinegar to a quart of water. Warm water works best. And yes, newspaper is still the best material to make glass shine, streak-free.



## Your Questions Answered

**Q.** *Is termite-infested mulch being shipped from areas damaged by Hurricane Katrina, or is this an internet myth?*

**A.** A couple of months ago there was a dire warning on the internet about mulch made from Hurricane Katrina debris that was being shipped around the country and sold cheap at large discount retailers. According to the internet message, this mulch may be infested with aggressive Formosan termites. Fortunately, this was a myth.

Although any bag of mulch sitting on the ground can become

infested with termites, termite colonies cannot survive the shredding process used to make the mulch. Formosan termites are much more likely to survive inside wood that is being re-used in new construction. But Louisiana has been aware of these problems, and from nearly the beginning has had a quarantine in place to prevent the shipment of wood infested with Formosan termites. All wood debris goes to an approved landfill that is within the quarantined area.



## What's That Bug in My Ear?



A second study has confirmed that cockroaches, earwigs, are by far the most common insects that enter people's ears, according to the records of physicians who have to remove the insects.

The report, in the recent *South African Medical Journal*, studied the insects extracted from ears by South African hospital physicians over a two year period. Almost half of all insects removed from ears were cockroaches, followed by flies, beetles, moths, and a tick. Cockroaches usually enter people's ears (mostly children) at night, as they sleep.

These findings are similar to a 1998 study in a Los Angeles hospital, which found that over ¾ of all insects removed from ears at the hospital were cockroaches.

## Did You Know?

⇒ **Africanized honey bees** continue their spread. They appeared for the first time last year in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Florida, and are now considered established in Florida, having been found in 14 counties. Although efforts are being made to stop their spread, they are established and spreading in south Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and southern Nevada and California. When these bees attack, they often crawl into openings in clothing or even into body openings. For instance, last year in Florida a horse killed by the bees had an estimated *3 pounds* of bees in its lungs and stomach!



⇒ If you visit a **flea market** this year looking for bargains, hopefully you won't bring home any fleas! The name 'flea market' came originally from Europe. Traveling merchants of old Europe were shunned because people feared they carried fleas that spread the dreaded plague. These merchants, though, offered very cheap prices and set up their stands in whatever odd place they could find. The markets eventually became known as *flea markets*.