Insect Swarms FAQ

By DoMyOwn staff

Questions and Answers about Swarming

Q) What is swarming?

A) "Swarming" is a natural phenomenon in the insect world that occurs from time to time when mass numbers of social insects leave their nests at the same time and move to another location. Another cause of swarming is when a group of adults insects take flight all at once for the purpose of mating. Swarming behavior is most commonly associated with ants, honeybees, and termites.

Q) What factors trigger swarming?

A) Swarming may be triggered by one or a combination of several different factors, including environmental changes (extreme temperatures, humidity, sunlight), pheromone production, population pressure, and the natural urge to reproduce.

Q) Can swarming be stopped?

A) Since swarming is the result of a strong, natural force, it is not likely that swarm can be prevented completely, but there are precautions that can be taken to ensure that a swarm of insects will not find its way inside your home. Physically excluding insects by sealing exterior cracks or other points of entry with caulk where insects may enter may keep the swarm from appearing inside. Also, sealing indoor cracks and crevices already inhabited by insects will force the swarm to appear somewhere else other than in your home, hopefully outside. Finally, swarms may be eliminated or delayed by reducing or eliminating indoor and outdoor populations with effective year round pest management and the use of **insect baits**.

Q) What can be done when swarming insects find their way inside?

A) If swarming adults fly inside, they can be knocked down with a contact aerosol. Before using any **contact aerosol**, make sure you have read and are familiar with all label directions, and that the area to be sprayed has been evacuated before application. Illuminated light traps may also work in removing large numbers of some species of swarming insects. A household vacuum hose may also be used to suck flying insects right out of the air.

Q) Why does swarming occur? I have never seen this happen before.

A) You may have had problems with a particular pest in your home or yard for years and never experienced a swarm. Now all of a sudden, swarming has become a problem. Why? The reason is that insect populations often take years to build up the critical mass necessary to initial swarming behavior. When the population is large enough, swarming may occur "all of a sudden". Changes in environmental conditions may also trigger "sudden" swarms.

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