White Footed Ant Identification & Biology

By DoMyOwn staff

Physical Appearance

- The white-footed ant is only about 1/8 inch long
- The white-footed ant is dark in color, with light yellow or yellowish-white tarsi (section at the end of its leg) causing it to appear white-footed

Habitat

White-footed ant populations are currently concentrated in Florida, and are observed in various locations in the landscape and in the home. Trees, especially those with loose bark, are an ideal nesting spot for White-footed ants. White-footed ants will also nest in attics, in wall voids, under roof shingles, beneath litter and compost piles, under rocks, and in cardboard boxes. White-footed ant colonies are particularly large, often containing millions of individuals, however a single colony tends to be made up of several interconnected satellite colonies.

Feeding Habits

White-footed ants prefer sweet foods and dead insects (such as termites and cockroaches), but will also feast on tree and flower nectars**.** The heaviest concentration of foraging white-footed ants occurs at night during the summer.

An interesting fact about white-footed ants is that the workers do not regurgitate food to share with other ants in the colony, as do most ant species. Instead, the workers lay unfertilized eggs which they feed to other ants in the colony that are not active foragers. What this means for pest control is that baiting is not effective with white-footed ants. Since white-footed ants do not share food, toxic baits affect only those ants that directly ingest it rather than being shared and spread throughout the colony.

Life Cycle

At a certain time of the year, white-footed ant colonies release winged males and females (or, "swarmers') from the nest. Each time a pair of these swarmers mate, a new colony will be founded. Winged males will mate once and then die, while winged females will die about 400 days after mating and establishing a new colony. The queen will then be replaced by a wingless daughter that mates with a wingless male who is capable of multiple matings.

Damage

White-footed ants do not bite, sting, or cause any kind of structural damage. These ants are pests mainly because of their large numbers and tendency to forage for sweet foods within the home.

Basic Control Methods

Try a combination of the following methods to reduce and eventually eliminate White-footed Ant populations in and around your home:

- Eliminate possible points of entry through repair of cracks and gaps (caulk, mesh screen, etc). Cut back shrubs, trees, and branches and remove other debris away from the structure.
- Drench any present ant mounds near your home with**Talstar.** Talstar may also be used indoors as a spot treatment to get rid of any existing foraging ants.
- Treat wall and cabinet voids, cracks, crevices, attics, and crawl spaces where ants hide with**Delta Dust.**

For more detailed information on White-footed Ant prevention and control, see**How To Get Rid of White-footed Ants**