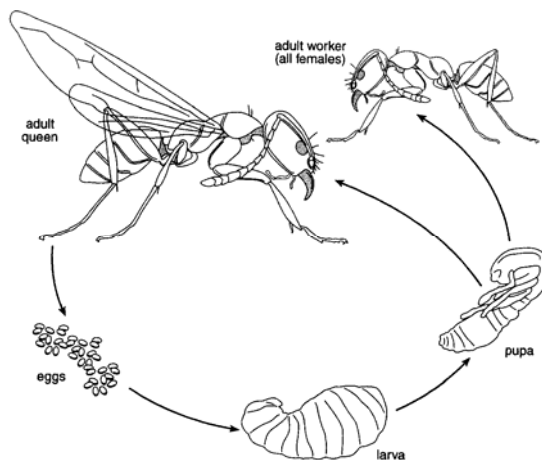


either in liquid or solid form. Ants naturally strive for a balanced diet to optimize the growth of the colony.

Although ant baits have a long history in pest control, there is renewed interest in their formulation and development. This new popularity of baits is most likely due to several factors, including public pressure to reduce pesticide use, current availability of insecticides ideal for baiting ants and numerous advantages which baits offer the pest control industry. Baits are more target-specific than traditional techniques of ant control which have relied on broadcast applications of insecticides in spot and perimeter treatments, placing heavy loads of broad-spectrum insecticides into the environment. Baits are more cost-effective compared to more labor intensive inspections to locate nests (attempts which are often unsuccessful) and to treatment strategies which often involve invasive techniques like drilling and dusting. And, if baits are used properly they are highly effective. For example they exploit the natural foraging behavior of ants to recruit and share resources, thereby spreading the bait toxicant throughout the entire colony, and eventually destroying it.

***Common effective Ant Bait Products Available in our local area stores:***

The effectiveness of ant bait varies depending on active ingredient, attractant, and ants to be controlled. Example product formulations: Avermectin, Fipronil, and Hydramethylnon. The bait delivery system, such as ant control granules that contain



**Life cycle of the Argentine ant** Illustration by V. Winemiller

hydramethylnon, can be very effective around perimeter of a structure. Hydramethylnon gels are often very effective in structures where ants are found. Solid avermectin baits may provide effectiveness and the extra safety of an enclosed bait station.

If one formulation of bait seems to be unacceptable to the ants, try a different type. There are seasonal food preferences for ants, and the attractant in the bait may not suit the season. Remember ant baits take a few days to do the job, so as long as the ants are taking the bait—have some patience!

***Always follow product label Instructions!***

# Ant Control in and Around Homes



Alameda County Vector Control  
1131 Harbor Bay Pkwy, Ste 166  
Alameda, CA 94502  
(510) 567-6800  
Web: <http://www.acvcgsd.org>

Borrowed information from Antweb and School IPM University of Florida: Dr. John Klotz - University of California, Dr. David Williams - USDA, ARS, Dr. Byron Reid - American Cyanimid, Dr. Karen Vail - University of Tennessee Dr. Phillip Koehler - University of Florida

## Ants and Human Interaction

There are 18 species of ants that have been identified in Alameda County according to AntWeb, sponsored by California Academy of the Science, but of course there may be more to identify! About 20,000 species have been identified around the world.

We can admire ants for their industriousness, organization, and persistence, but loathe to find them in the kitchen in the morning! As colonial creatures, with great scouts and numerous workers, they are fastidious survivors and propagators!

Most ants are not considered “vectors,” although the “red imported fire ant” that has been making some headway into California has a vicious bite and sting, and are considered dangerous. They have yet to be discovered in our area. We do have some large red ants that usually do not invade structures, but will bite you good if you disturb their mound.

**The Argentine ant** is steadily becoming most common ant in coastal California. It is a small, dark-colored ant about 3 mm (1/8 inch) long that invades homes in search of food and water. They are especially fond of sweets, but will feed on practically any food, such as cat food. Whatever food they find they carry back to their nest in endless ant columns. These ants are extremely well adapted to urbanized areas of the United

States with mild climates and well-watered gardens. They pose a serious threat to native wildlife by upsetting delicate food webs. They are especially formidable due to their aggressive behavior and the enormous size of their colonies, which often “team up” with other colonies of Argentine ants create super-colonies; nests that may contain hundreds of queens and millions of workers and cover several city blocks.

Species	County
<i>Aphaenogaster laevigatus</i>	Alameda County
<i>Camponotus laevigatus</i>	Alameda County
<i>Camponotus semitestaceus</i>	Alameda County
<i>Camponotus vicinus</i>	Alameda County
<i>Crematogaster coarctata</i>	Alameda County
<i>Formica moki</i>	Alameda County
<i>Formica subpolita</i>	Alameda County
<i>Hypoponera opacior</i>	Alameda County
<i>Linepithema humile</i>	Alameda County
<i>Messor andrei</i>	Alameda County
<i>Monomorium pharaonis</i>	Alameda County
<i>Pheidole californica</i>	Alameda County
<i>Pheidole hyatti</i>	Alameda County
<i>Prenolepis imparis</i>	Alameda County
<i>Pseudomyrmex apache</i>	Alameda County
<i>Solenopsis xyloni</i>	Alameda County
<i>Stenamma californicum</i>	Alameda County
<i>Tapinoma sessile</i>	Alameda County

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AntWeb and The California Academy of Sciences.

During cold weather, the ratio of workers to queens is much lower than in summer months. Like all ants, this species has a complex life cycle developing from eggs into white legless larvae and pupae before emerging as adults. Development from egg to pupa takes place within the nest and the immature stages are rarely

seen. Queens and drones mate within the nest. Only the drones emerge and fly away and probably die without mating again. Swarms of males occur between dusk and dawn and are rarely seen. When queens disperse, it is on foot accompanied by an escort of workers and sometimes brood. This ant probably first arrived in the U.S. at the Port of New Orleans in the 1890s. It is believed to have traveled on coffee boats from Brazil, not Argentina. It was originally known as the New Orleans ant but the city leaders objected and the name was changed.

**Ant baits** are the most efficient and effective products to control ant colonies. Like all living organisms, ants have certain nutritional requirements: carbohydrates, proteins, water and fats. In nature they obtain these essential nutrients from a varied diet of insect prey (proteins and fats), nectar, aphid honeydew and other plant carbohydrates. These nutrients are found

