Ant Prevention

Important Steps for Preventing Ants in Schools

Plan to Protect: Review past problems and sightings of pests in the school

During the Plan to Protect step, create a list of places where ants have been reported in the past. This will be the starting point for preventing future pest issues.

Early pavement ant Inspections

In March or April, look in the areas where ants were previously reported. Pavement ants have the ability to live around building foundations or underneath concrete slab-on-grade construction. In spring, there may be a flush of winged ants as the ant season kicks off. Inspect areas for ant activity and vacuum up evidence of old ant activity, as well as food particles that may encourage ants to remain in the area. If ants are found conduct control measures as outlined in the Control Methods section, below.

Leaf/Litter/Landscape

Leaves and litter in landscape around schools provide many species of ants with areas to form a colony and ultimately enter a facility. There will be food available in these areas as well. At the very least, make sure there is no accumulation of trash and plant material around the school. It would be better to replace any ground spreading plants (such as yews), especially as the school is continually challenged by ants. Loading docks and garbage dumpsters are particularly prone to having litter and food accumulate in or near them creating a pest-friendly area.

Check building for cracks and gaps

Buildings that settle, new construction, utility lines (gas, electric, etc.) into the building have gaps and cracks that open the school to pest invasion. An annual inspection and rechecks whenever pests occur will ensure that pests are not entering the school. Remember, some of these cracks and gaps may be underground and in the foundation.

Summer ant inspections

The summer is when ant colonies begin to grow and there is an increasing need for food, water and space. Many ant species will begin to explore around the structure. Some of the ants will have their colonies in the landscape (e.g., carpenter, pavement, and field ants) and a couple of species may be inside the building (pavement ants). Respond to reports from staff and quickly check the areas where ants have previously appeared. Catching ant activity early means they can be prevented from becoming widespread.

Inspect classes for ant activity

Prior to the start of the school year, make sure there are no active ant infestations in the school. With a flashlight, inspect corners, cupboards and behind equipment for the signs of ants. Remember “ledges, edges and lines (Oh my)!”: pests prefer to travel around the room perimeters and along edges, staying hidden as much as possible.
Responding to Teacher and Staff reports

Responding to a pest sighting is not just about applying some pesticide and reducing the number of pests. By being present, the pests are telling you that they have found suitable habitat they need to survive and grow. Ask your self and your pest management professional: “Why are these pests present?” The answer could be food, or hiding places or water. Knowing why they are present will help you determine how to permanently fix the situation.

Control Methods:

Ants can be controlled by four easy steps:

- Clean up any infested food or carefully vacuum any food residue that the ants may be using. Remember that ants eat many things that we might not consider food, such as skin flakes, other insects, food crumbs etc.

- Apply a residual insecticide into the cracks or crevices where ants are present (follow the insecticide label). Then seal the hole or crack that they are using. If the building exterior is brick and the “hole” they are using is actually a weep (or vent) hole, do not seal the hole but install pest screening.

- If you are having difficulty in finding holes that the ants are using, the area is difficult to access, or the access points are widespread, consider using an insecticidal bait in the area (follow the use directions on the insecticide label).

- Work with your pest management professional to determine if any other issues require correction to reduce or eliminate ant activity.