

PHARAOH ANTS

Monomorium pharaonis (Linnaeus)



PEST STATS

Color: Body usually pale, varying from yellowish to reddish with abdomen often darker to black

Legs: 6

Shape: Monomorphic with segmented body

Size: 1/16" (1.5 – 2.0 mm)

Antennae: Yes

Region: All

Pharaoh ants get their name from the mistaken belief that they were one of the plagues of Egypt during the time of Pharaohs. This species is thought to be native to Africa, but is currently found throughout the United States.

Habits

Colonies of Pharaoh ants tend to be large, with workers numbering in the thousands. If disturbed, members of the colony will migrate to new locations to establish several new colonies through a process called budding.

Pharaoh ants feed on a variety of food sources including sweets, oils and proteins. They will also eat other dead insects.

Habitat

Pharaoh ants are commonly found in commercial food handling establishments such as hotels, grocery stores and hospitals. Inside, they nest in warm, humid areas near food and water sources. Nests are usually located in inaccessible areas such as wall voids, behind baseboards, in furniture and under floors. These ants often use electrical and telephone wires as a highway system to travel through walls and between floorboards.

Outside, Pharaoh ants are typically found in shaded areas or under debris. They cannot survive outdoors year-round in the northern regions of the country.

Threats

Pharaoh ants have been implicated in the spread of more than a dozen disease pathogens including salmonella and *Streptococcus pyogenes*. They are notorious for being a major nuisance in hospitals where they can enter wounds, enter IV bottles and can sometimes even seek moisture from the mouths of sleeping patients.