

Baiting with Xstinguish to control Argentine and Darwin's Ants

Know the enemy

- Argentine and Darwin's ants are a honey brown colour when viewed in sunlight. Most of the more common house ants are black.
- Argentine ants are slightly bigger (2.5 – 3mm) than Darwin's (2.0mm). Darwin's ants give off a strong odour when crushed.
- Both species form multi-queen colonies and will become completely dominant within two to three years of arrival.
- Both species build nests underground, usually only metres apart. Their nests will be distributed throughout a section with a preference for barked areas, shrubberies and compost heaps.
- Both species react frantically when their nest is disturbed; Argentine ants tend to be more aggressive.
- Both species will trail up shrubs and trees to "farm" (tend and protect) scale insects and aphids in return for honeydew.
- They forage to seek food, forming trails on the smoother surfaces along the edges of curbing, retaining walls, pathways, drives, cracks, garden edging and when climbing shrubs and trees. They will travel indoors to seek food if outdoor supplies are limited.
- Xstinguish is effective in killing the whole nest because the workers take it to their nests and it is passed on to the queens, workers, larvae and pupae.

Bait

If you have Argentine or Darwin's ants on your property, you can either treat them yourself or get a professional pest control operator to do the job for you. To achieve good control, the whole property should be treated except inside the house and garage and on hard surfaces (driveways). "Xstinguish" Ant Bait

will usually give good control when applied correctly. Read and follow the directions on the cartridge label regarding Precautions, Disposal, First Aid and Directions for Use. It is sold in 125gm tubes and 325gm cartridges; the cartridge is dispensed with a caulking gun.

How the bait works

Xstinguish bait contains protein, carbohydrates and a slow-acting toxin; worker ants scavenge for protein when feeding larvae and queens and share carbohydrates amongst themselves. This results in the toxin being distributed throughout the nest before it starts to affect the ants and trigger a bait rejection process.

When to Bait

Baiting achieves good results when undertaken during the warmer weather between December and late March. High ground temperatures and warm dry weather ensure a high level of ant activity, maximising uptake before bait rejection occurs. This may occur within 8 – 12 hours. Bait uptake may be limited if there are plenty of other food sources around (e.g. in compost heaps). It takes 2 – 3 weeks for baiting to become effective and the colony moves into a state of confusion towards the end of this period with eggs, pupae and larvae being moved around. Baits are most palatable when moist and this is best achieved by laying bait in the early evening, as ants forage at night during warm weather. If bait is laid earlier and exposed to direct sunlight, it should be covered to minimise drying.

Bait Size

Use small blobs of baits (up to 1 cm, the size of a small finger nail). If exposed to sunlight, the bait should be covered to slow drying, making it unattractive to the ants. Cover with pieces of bark, sticks, leaves or small pebbles.

Where to Bait

To achieve a 90% + knockdown, use 2m spacing in the most situations:

- Lawns and edges along paths and gardens
- Driveway edges, cracks and grooves
- House foundation surroundings
- Vege gardens (if not being regularly dug or disturbed)
- Shrub/ flower gardens
- Glass' house – inside and around outside edge
- Garden sheds – around outside edge

Closer spacing should be used in the following situation:

- Barked garden areas – 1m spacing
- Compost bins – 1m spacing around bins and in the mature mix
- Pot plants – several closely-spaced baits at the base or around the top
- Water toby – several closely-spaced baits inside or around the outside edge

Helpful Hints

- A 325g cartridge should be sufficient to cover one large section (up to 1,000 sqm) or two small (under 500 sqm) sections. Surplus bait can be refrigerated in a plastic bag and re-applied 4 – 6 weeks later on any surviving nests.
- Allow approximately 2 hours to bait an average sized section properly.
- If purchasing a caulking gun, go for a pressure-release, non-dripping type.
- Use secateurs to cut the end of the bait cartridge, just above the thread and cut the nozzle near the tip – it can always be enlarged if necessary.
- Cover all bait to prevent premature drying.
- Don't mow lawns in the week prior to baiting. Longer grass helps shade the bait when you put the bait nozzle in the grass and saves a lot of covering.
- Don't water baited areas until late afternoon of the following day.
- Cover bait in the cracks or grooves of driveways with small stones or pieces of bark to protect it from trampling. Keep bait away from the normal vehicle wheel tracks.
- When baiting along grass/concrete edges (unless neatly trimmed), scuff the edge of the grass up, lay the bait underneath and lower the grass down
- In bark gardens, the nozzle can be just pushed under the surface bark to cover the bait.
- There is no need to bait the surface of large concrete or gravel areas – just along any cracks or grooves and around the outside edge and weedy areas.
- We suggest keeping children and dogs out of the baited area for at least 24 hours or until the bait has gone hard.
- The bait is toxic to fish and aquatic organisms. Keep all bait out of any channels that drain into your pond and at least 1m away from the edge of the pond. Don't hose bait into the storm water drain.

Notes prepared by Tasman District Council. For further information, contact Robin van Zoelen or Lindsay Vaughan on Ph. 03 543 8400.

Feel free to contact us:



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