

Acrobat Ants



The acrobat ant gets its common name from raising its abdomen over its thorax and head when disturbed. These ants, which are actually several species, will bite on occasion and will give off a repulsive odor when disturbed.

Inside a structure, acrobat ants can feed on sweets and high-protein foods (meats). They may nest in wall voids, baseboards, or door and window framing particularly if it has been damaged by moisture or previously infested with other insects. They may even enlarge cavities formed by other insects such as old galleries of termites, carpenter ants, and other wood-infesting insects. Rigid board insulation used to construct walls of many newer homes also is an attractive nesting site for acrobat ants.

When infestations of acrobat ants are found in a home, they usually entered along electrical and telephone lines, tree limbs in contact with the structure, or fences and decks. However, these ants also can enter a home through many small entry points around doors, windows, and vents.

Biology and Habits: Outdoors, acrobat ants can feed on honeydew from aphids, mealybugs, and live or dead insects. They are typically found under rocks, or in logs, firewood, and trees. These ants prefer nesting in moist wood softened by decay or fungi. Occasionally, acrobat ants will strip the insulation from electrical or telephone wires causing short circuits.



Identification: Most acrobat ants are black to light brown, but a few are multicolored with the head or abdomen darker than the rest of the body. Most species are 1/16 to 1/8 inch long. The workers in each colony are monomorphic, which means they are all similar in size. One clue for identification is that they have a 2-segmented section called a petiole that attaches to the front portion of the abdomen with a pair of spines on the thorax. The abdomen is shaped like a heart and is best viewed from above.

Control: Successful control of acrobat ants depends on a thorough inspection and correct identification. Nest removal is always the most effective ant management strategy. Both interior and exterior inspections are necessary. The ants inside may originate from an outdoor nest site. Inside a structure, detection of acrobat ant nests can be difficult. Look for small holes, moisture damage and areas previously infested with other wood-nesting insects. One sign may be the accumulation of debris the ants throw out, especially if the colony is infesting rigid board insulation. If nests in a structure cannot be removed, sprays or dusts can be used effectively if applied directly into the nest.

