

CRAZY ANT

The crazy ant, known as *hormigas locas* in Latino sections, gets its name because it rapidly darts here and there as though it has no goal in mind. Crazy ants are opportunists, both in nesting and feeding. Their colonies consist of up to 2,000 workers and as many as 40 queens. Crazy ants are found in every state in the U.S. but are more common on the Gulf coast and Southeast coast.



These ants are specialists at finding and occupying flimsy and unstable nest sites. They'll often locate their nests under trash and debris, remain a few days or weeks, and then move on. Their ability to move their nest quickly is one of the reasons they are hard to control.

Outside, nests can be found in debris piles, tree holes, mulch, rotten wood, or in soil under objects, including sidewalks. Inside, crazy ants will nest in voids or foundation walls, under floors, behind baseboards and window frames, near hot water pipes, and in potted plants.

The ants' food preferences are seasonal. This is why toxic baits sometimes work and sometimes don't. In the summer, crazy ants prefer a high protein diet including live and dead insects. They may refuse sweets, including honey or sugar baits, which they seem especially fond of at other times. In spring and fall, they prefer the honeydew secretions from aphids and other plant-feeding insects. Crazy ants frequently invade homes and other buildings in the fall, after rains, or when their honeydew supply dries up.



In addition to its unusual fast and erratic movements, the crazy ant can be identified by its extremely long legs and antennae. The basal segment (scape) of its antennae is twice as long as the head and the antennae do not end in a club. The crazy ant has one node between thorax and abdomen and is only about 1/16 to 1/8 inch long.

Crazy Ant Control

As with most every ant, the best control is to find and treat the nest. It can be especially difficult to track crazy ants back to their nest for treatment. They do follow trails but the trails are crisscrossing and erratic.

An insecticide treatment can trigger crazy ants to move or split their nest into two or more colonies. The nest can be moved in a matter of minutes, and if the majority of ants don't pick up a lethal dose of insecticide in that time, the colony will survive. Fast-acting dusts or aerosols have to be applied to all potential nest sites within 20 feet of the center of foraging activity. Inject wall voids through electrical outlets or around pipe conduits. An exterior perimeter treatment including window frames, utility openings, brick weep holes, etc. will help if ants are foraging in from outside.



Baits *vary* in effectiveness against crazy ants because their food preferences are always changing. Baits should be applied in and near nest sites, along foraging trails and around the perimeter of the building. If one bait doesn't work, try another.