

## Competing with Ants for Kitchen Counter Space?

### You May Have Odorous House Ants

Odorous house ants are small ants about 1/8 inch long and dark brown in color. They are the most common home invading ant in Nebraska and are often a nuisance in kitchens. Odorous house ants get their name because they smell like rotten coconuts when crushed. This very distinctive smell is different from other ant species.

Odorous house ants usually nest outdoors in the soil under stones, logs, mulch, debris and other items. They will also nest indoors in wall and floor voids, particularly in moist or warm areas. If only a few workers (wingless ants) are observed in the house, it is an indication they are nesting outdoors and entering the house in search of food. If winged swarms are found indoors, or if workers are consistently seen in great abundance, they may be nesting within the house.

Odorous house ants regularly search for food along well-traveled trails. They feed on dead insects, sweets and meats. One of their favorite foods is the sweet honeydew produced by plant sap feeding insects such as aphids and mealybugs.

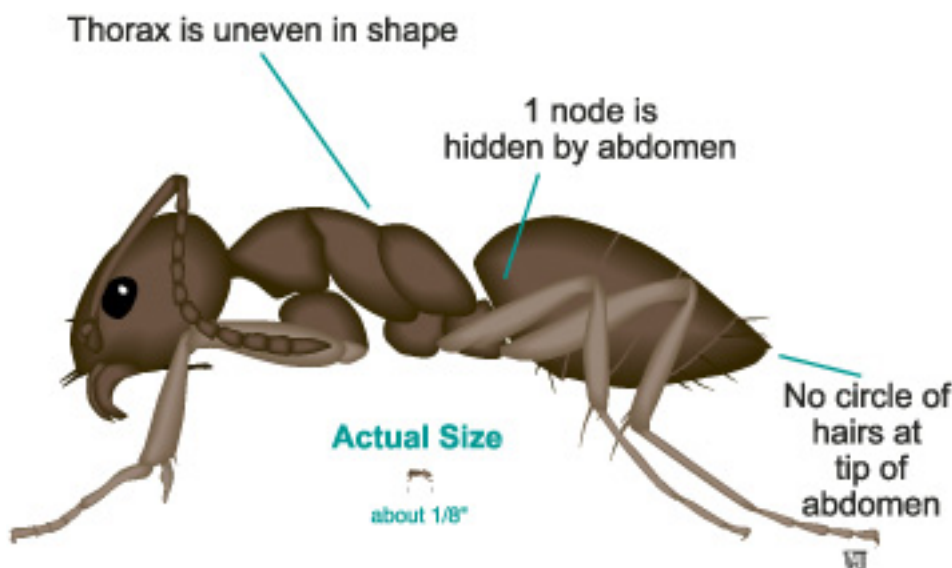
Control of odorous house ants should begin with an attempt to locate the ant colony. Effective ant control requires treating the colony either with insecticides, or a bait. Careful and frequent observation may be necessary to find the colony. Ants entering from outdoors can be discouraged by sealing as many cracks and gaps in exterior walls as possible. Lawn and garden sprays can be used *outside* to control individual ant hills near the house or to create a protective barrier to stop foragers from wandering into the house.

Odorous house ant colonies inside the house can be treated with ready-to-use ant syrup baits that will control sweet-loving ants. These baits should be placed near where ants are seen or on or along trails. Do not use

insecticide sprays in conjunction with bait treatments. Insecticide sprays will counteract the baits, because the ants must feed on the bait and take it back to the colony. Insecticides may kill the ants, making the bait treatment ineffective. It may take several weeks or more to get rid of the ants using baits.

If you seem unable to control the ant problem or find the location of the colony, a pest control operator can be hired to complete the treatments. However, monthly treatment for a year or more should not be necessary for control.

Not all ants look the same or respond the same way to treatments. If you aren't sure what type of ant you have, bring specimens to the Lancaster County Extension Office for a free I.D. (BPO)



## Look for Vole Damage

We have had a number of calls about voles—small, mouse-like rodents sometimes called meadow mice. Voles have short tails (about one inch long), stocky build and small eyes. Voles can cause problems by damaging lawns, gardens, tree plantings and other plants.

### Damage

One clue that you have voles is if you see their surface runways. The voles make the runways by clipping off grass and plants making a path about one to two inches wide (see image). People often notice these

pathways after the snow melts.

Voles damage woody plants during late fall through early spring when it is hard to find green vegetation. Voles tunnel through snow, and may gnaw on trees and shrubs up to the height that snow accumulates during winter.

### Control

If you discover voles, it doesn't mean you automatically have major property damage. High populations can build up quickly and can be cause for concern.

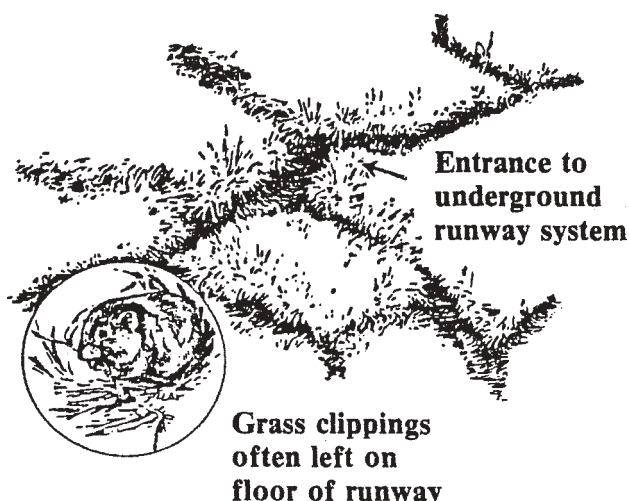
Before you decide to control

voles, consider the extent of the problem in relation to the cost of control. For example, a few voles could damage a highly valued tree or flower bed and warrant control. At other times, you may not even notice the voles or find damage, making control unnecessary. There is a relationship between vole populations and the level of damage you can expect. Prevention is more beneficial than population control after the damage has occurred.

A combination of methods may be more effective than relying on any one method for vole damage control. Most vole damage problems in urban and backyard areas probably involve small vole populations that can be controlled with habitat modifications, fencing or exclusion and snap-trapping. If you had problems this year, consider fencing susceptible trees next fall to prevent additional damage from occurring.

### To Learn More

Call or visit the extension office to pick up the publication "Controlling Vole Damage" (NebGuide G887). This resource is also available on the Web. Visit [lanaster.unl.edu](http://lanaster.unl.edu). (SC)



Surface runway system of the prairie vole

### UPCOMING WORKSHOP

## Everything Homeowners Need to Know About Termite Control

When: Thursday, May 13, 6:30–9:30 p.m.  
Where: Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln

Attendees will:

- Learn to identify termites and their damage
- Learn unbiased information about effective treatments, based on research results
- Receive up-to-date reference materials
- Be informed consumers and make better decisions

Cost: \$25

Call 441-7180 for more information.



*On March 1, live termites were brought to the office after a homeowner found them during home remodeling/repair activities. These are the first specimens we've seen this year, and it is a little earlier than normal. All homeowners should be able to recognize the signs of termites...come to this workshop and learn what you need to know.*

## Spring Turkey Hunting Workshop

Wednesday, March 31, 2004

6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Lancaster Extension Education Center

If you are interested in hunting turkeys in the spring season, this is a workshop you can't miss. Experts will share information about turkey biology, behavior and hunting tips that will make you more successful. Topics covered will include turkey calls, camouflage, using ground blinds, choosing the best shot load, field dressing, guns, safety and state regulations.

This FREE seminar is offered by Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, but seating will be limited, so RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED. Call 471-5558. (BPO)

## 2004 Household Hazardous Waste Collections

More collection dates and locations than ever! Residents of Lancaster County can bring household hazardous wastes to the following collection sites.

**Saturday, April 24 Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.**  
9 a.m.–1 p.m. 4021 North 56 Street

**Friday, May 21 Emerald - Lancaster County Shop**  
3–7 p.m. (2 blocks north of Hwy 6 on NW 84 St.)

**Saturday, May 22 Pfizer Animal Health**  
9 a.m. - 1 p.m. 601 West Cornhusker Highway  
(*Latex Paint Exchange Day. Only good, usable latex paint is accepted. Please bring containers that are at least half full.*)

**Friday, June 25 Union College**  
3–7 p.m. Parking Lot, 52 and Cooper  
(3 blocks south of 52nd and Calvert)

**Saturday, June 26 Nebraska Wesleyan University**  
9 a.m.–1 p.m. Parking lot, 56 and Huntington

**Friday, Sep. 10 Waverly - Lancaster County Shop Salt Dome**  
3–7 p.m. (5 blocks north of Hwy 6 on N. 141 St.)

**Saturday, Sep. 11 Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Dept.**  
9 a.m. - 1 p.m. 3140 N Street, South parking lot

**Saturday, Oct. 9 Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Dept.**  
9 a.m. - 1 p.m. 3140 N Street, South parking lot

**Saturday, Nov. 6 State Fair Park, 4-H Youth Complex**  
9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Items you can bring for disposal:

- **HEAVY METALS:** items containing mercury such as thermometers and fluorescent bulbs.
- **SOLVENTS:** mineral spirits, turpentine, paint strippers and thinners, oil-based paints, varnishes, stains, polishes, waxes.
- **PESTICIDES:** weed killers, garden sprays, wood preservatives, pet flea and tick products, roach powder, rat poisons. You may also bring banned products, like DDT, chlordane, 2,4,5-T, pentachlorophenol, silvex.
- **PCB'S:** Ballasts from old fluorescent fixtures, small capacitors from old appliances, including radios, motors and televisions.

Leave products in their original container and keep the label intact. If the label is destroyed or unreadable, label the products to the best of your knowledge. Open, leaking or rusted containers should be placed in a clear plastic bag during transport. Do not mix chemicals.

Do not bring latex paint (except for the Latex Paint Exchange on May 22), medicines, explosives, fertilizers or general household trash. Used oil, antifreeze and batteries should be recycled.

For more specific information, call the  
Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at  
**441-8040**