

SPONSORED CONTENT

2021 State of the ANT CONTROL MARKET

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Greetings from Syngenta,

While the past year has been unprecedented in many ways, the need for effective ant control has remained a constant. In fact, according to PCT magazine's State of the Ant Control Market report findings, 76% of pest management professionals (PMPs) surveyed saw steady or increased ant service revenues in 2020. PMPs have had to step up and go above and beyond, often in challenging conditions, to keep customers' homes and businesses free from these nuisance pests. We appreciate your hard work, and we know your customers are grateful as well.

As ant control continues to be a top priority for customers, it's important to keep up with the latest research and trends to avoid wasting time and money on expensive callbacks. That's why Syngenta is proud to once again partner with PCT to sponsor the 2021 State of the Ant Control Market report. In the following pages, you'll receive survey results from fellow PMPs, including the latest ant control updates, ideas for marketing and insight into the future of the industry. We think you'll find this year's report to be valuable for your business' success and growth.

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- **Advion Ant and Optigard® Ant gel baits**, two of the leading ant baits in the industry, contain unique bait matrices that are highly palatable to all major ant species — even sweet feeders.
- **Advion WDG, Demand® CS, Optigard Flex and Tandem® insecticides** are residual spray products that provide excellent control of super-colony species and are effective for preventive maintenance.

Ants provide unique challenges for PMPs, but we know it's nothing you can't handle with the right resources. We're looking forward to your continued success in providing your customers with ant-free environments.

Eric Paysen

Eric Paysen

Technical Services Manager

Syngenta Professional Pest Management



For more information, visit SyngentaPMP.com.



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Upping the ANTe

Call it what you want, but 2020 was a bugger for everyone, with business shutdowns and the resulting economic impacts, along with looming uncertainty about everything from when a vaccine would emerge to who would win the presidential election.

Interestingly, most of the pest management professionals (PMPs) we surveyed and interviewed for the State of the Ant Control Market Report said 2020 was not all bad. In fact, just 35 percent of respondents said the COVID-19 pandemic was a limiting factor in growing their ant business.


"Ants are job security in this business," says Barry Craddock, president, Craddock Pest Control, Glasgow, Ky. The service grows a little bit every year, he says. "One job gets you another job."

"But in one place, ants can make you look amazing, and the next place you can come out looking not so good at all," Craddock adds, echoing the sentiment of other PMPs. Variables for success include customer education and cooperation, addressing structural

issues that are "open doors" for ants and selecting effective products with a long residual.

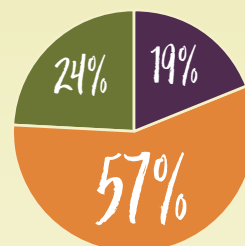
Christian Wilcox estimates that ants are an issue for about 90 percent of the accounts McCauley Services treats in its Arkansas and Oklahoma service areas. The business certainly isn't slowing. The company took a solutions-based approach to operating in an unprecedented year by coming up with creative ways to identify ants and expanding its exclusion business, both of which are examples of solutions-focused strategies the company has implemented.

As for Craddock, "We probably had the best year ever," he says. He attributes the increase in his ant control services to people staying at home and noticing pests more.

In keeping with the spirit of adapt, change and execute, PCT's 2021 Ant State of the Market Report, sponsored by Syngenta and performed by Readex Research, reveals creative ways PMPs are managing ants, reducing callbacks, establishing best practices and marketing their ant service. 

COVID-19 CONSEQUENCES

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted service revenue?



● positive impact
● neither a positive nor negative impact
● negative impact

Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 269

BUSINESS AS USUAL

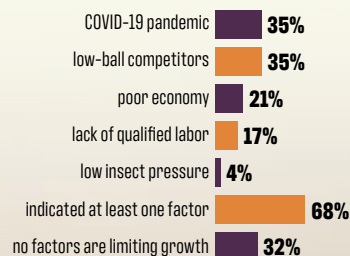
Has your location adjusted ant control treatment protocols because of the pandemic?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 269

GROWTH LIMITATIONS

What factors are limiting your ability to grow your ant business?



Resource: Readex Research; Respondents: 269; multiple answers

Curbing Callbacks

Avoiding callbacks requires some teaching on the behalf of the PMP. Otherwise, clients can unwittingly sabotage a treatment. “With ants, you have to get the customer involved,” says Derek Salazar, owner, FullScope Pest Control, Kingwood, Texas.

“When you find out they’ve had a problem for some time, you have to set expectations as far as letting them know that it’s not necessarily going to be solved in one visit, one treatment,” Salazar adds.

Salazar advises clients to reduce leaf litter around the home and watch for damaged wood that can harbor carpenter ants and other insects. “Not having branches of trees touching the structure can prevent carpenter ants,” he says, relating that providing this information to customers engages them in the process and increases their accountability, therefore reducing callbacks.

The cleaning products clients use inside can interfere with baiting success, so Salazar makes them aware of that. “Using standard bleach wipes on a countertop can interrupt pheromone trails. Then you get a splitting effect, and it’s hard to find out how they are trailing,” he says.

Scheduling a follow-up visit 10 to 14 days after treating a robust infestation

also can reduce callbacks, Salazar adds. “Sometimes, you have to be proactive vs. waiting for them to call you,” he says.

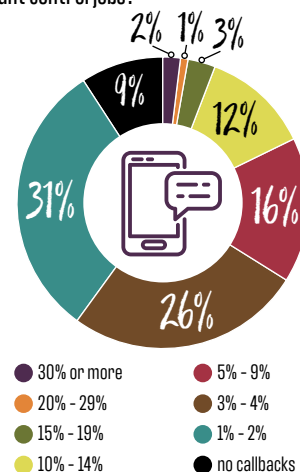
Also important is helping clients understand that baiting takes time. “You have to give the ants time to accept the bait and bring it back to the colony,” says Tony Esposito, owner, The Bug Reaper, Katy, Texas. “We tell customers, ‘You have to give it at least a week. Don’t expect results the next day.’ If you educate people, they seem to be OK with that. It’s all about being on the same page.”

In commercial kitchens, Esposito works directly with general managers, and food and beverage managers. “I go in and pull out refrigeration units and take pictures,” he says, adding that he’s been known to show a manager the spray wand he uses to treat and point out: “This is not a magic wand. You have to help me.” He adds: “Ants aren’t going to eat my bait if they can eat fajitas instead.”

He also shows them how effective products can be with compliance. Showing product efficacy also can go a long way toward encouraging accountability and preventing callbacks. Once, he recorded a video of an ant trail moving bait granules back to their colony. “I showed it to the homeowners and they could literally see the granules moving.”

TYPICAL CALLBACK RATE

What is your location’s typical callback rate for its ant control jobs?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 269

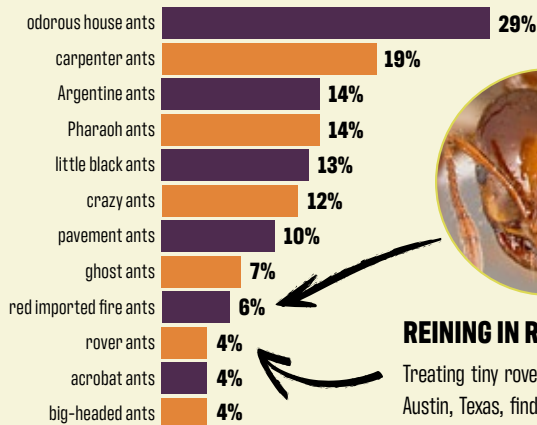
TAKE THE BAIT

During the pandemic, the multi-family housing and senior living facilities Carmen Reino, owner, Anchor Pest Control, Brunswick, N.J., services were not inviting servicepeople into their buildings. So, he offered a “socially distant” way for them to still get interior control. “We started giving them ant baits and instructing them on where to place them,” he says. “That helped a lot during the time when we could only service the outside.”



UNRULY ANTagonists

What ant species have been the most difficult to control?

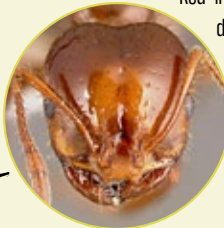


Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 269; multiple answers

FIRED UP

Red imported fire ants are a real issue in Central Arkansas, especially during drought times, says Christian Wilcox, technical director, McCauley Services. "When you have fire ants crawling in the interior of a structure and there are kids in the environment, that's a real concern," he says. The solution: "We use dust products that will repel the ants out, so then what we do on the outside of the building can hopefully eliminate the problem."

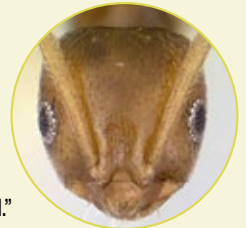
Photo by: April Noble, Antweb.org, Bugwood.org



REINING IN ROVERS

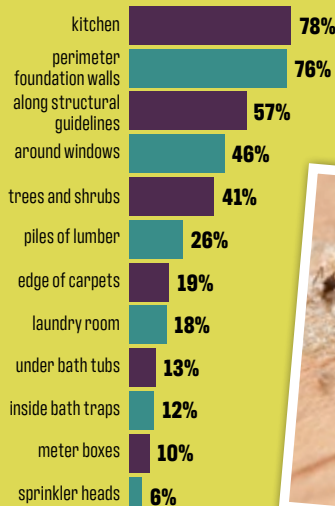
Treating tiny rover ants can be a challenge, but Bobbie Terry, owner, The Bug Lady, Austin, Texas, finds that a less-is-more approach assures the pests will carry bait back to their nests. "We mix the chemical slightly less than what the label calls for," she says. "The rover ants are so tiny that we found out it would kill them before they got back to the nest. If they don't make it back to the nest, you won't gain control."

Photo by: Eli Sarnat, Antkey, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org



HOME HOT SPOTS

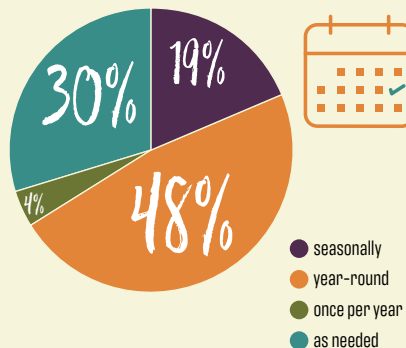
Where are the primary ant "hot spots" in homes/residential properties in your location's market area?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 269; multiple answers

SERVICE FREQUENCY

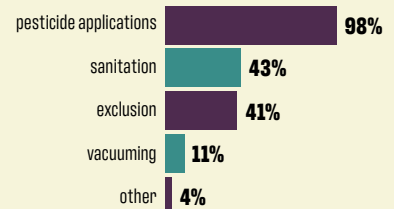
How often does your location provide its ant control services to its typical client?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 269

ALL CONTROL MEASURES USED

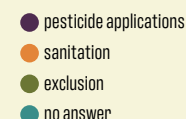
What types of control measures does your location use to manage ants in homes and/or businesses?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 269; multiple answers

PRIMARY CONTROL MEASURES USED

What is your location's primary control measure for managing ants in homes and/or businesses?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 269

Satisfaction Guaranteed — or Not?



As with any pest, there are a host of variables that can interfere with product efficacy — and there’s a balance to strike with “the customer’s always right.” (Check out *Curbing Callbacks* on page 4.) So, is offering a warranty or guarantee an inroad to peace of mind that will win client loyalty? Or, is it an invitation to retreat and lose money on services?

There are two schools of thought.

Chris Brennan has been in business for 39 years and runs Brennan’s Pest Control in Oak Park, Ill. He estimates that about 30 percent of his overall revenue comes from treating ants, and he uses an à la carte approach. If he gets a call about ants,

he deals with the ants. If a homeowner wants a quarterly program, he’ll offer it — but he does not generally sell a package. And, he never offers warranties.

“I’ve always viewed it as a crazy thing to do in our industry,” he says. “We are dealing with biological issues, and there are customers who are not cooperative when it comes to cleaning or managing their environments. There are structural issues, for instance. A house can have a crumbling foundation. I tell customers, ‘I’ll do the best I can for you.’”

He also is honest about whether the ant situation will require more than one treatment or ongoing pest management. “Sometimes one service is sufficient, and

other times the house needs follow-ups and we determine that in the coming weeks. A house needs what it needs.”

Other PMPs find that a warranty gives customers confidence that they can trust the service. Christopher O’Brien, owner of Scorpion Specialists in Phoenix, Ariz., says 60 percent of his clients have ant problems. He offers a six-month warranty on a new exterior red fire ant control. “If a customer is just having us bait, we offer a 30-day warranty,” he says. There are no stipulations on the exterior warranty — he will re-treat for free if the client calls before six months is over — but inside, customers have to clean and do their part or the callback is not free. “The gel ant baits work really good and I’ve never had a callback on them,” he adds.

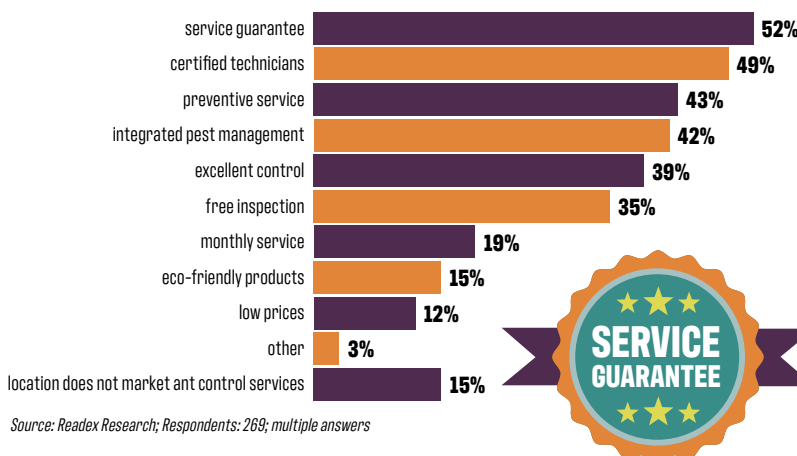
Bobbie Terry is owner of The Bug Lady in Austin, Texas, and founder of Women in Pest Control. She offers a 30-day warranty on services. “I’ll come back and re-treat at no charge,” she says of the policy.

How often does she have to make good on the warranty? “Hardly ever.”

“Whether I do a special or ongoing treatment, customers sign an agreement that states if I find sanitation or structural issues, they are responsible for correcting those problems — and if they don’t, I can charge for a re-treat,” Terry says. 🐜

HOW DO PMPs MARKET ANT SERVICES?

What aspects of your location’s ant control services are featured in its marketing efforts?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 269; multiple answers



New Normal, New Opportunities

Pest control companies that focused primarily on hospitality and restaurant services saw a steep slowdown in March 2020. But the good news is many pest management firms were diversified and just experienced *some* losses. Fortunately, *all* business is coming back strong.

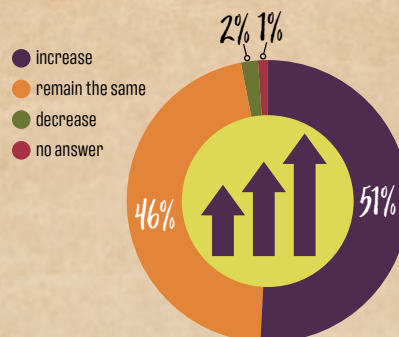
“Last year in March, I lost about 25 percent of my business,” says Bobbie Terry, owner, The Bug Lady, Austin, Texas. “But since then, I got 20 percent of that work back, and it has been an uphill climb ever since — and I’m still climbing.”

Regarding ant opportunity, Carmen Reino says he sees more opportunity with an increase in carpenter ant infestations. “It’s because of the milder winters, I assume,” says the owner of Anchor Pest Control in Brunswick, N.J.

Derek Salazar says his business, FullScope Pest Control in Kingwood, Texas, “has not slowed down — it’s crazy. I don’t see the difference on the business side with the pandemic, and we are taking all of the necessary precautions.”

CONTROL IN 2021: STEADY GROWTH

Compared with 2020, do you anticipate the percentage of your location’s revenue generated from its ant control services to increase, decrease, or remain the same in 2021?

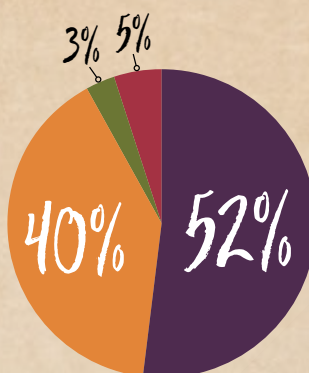


Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 269

ANT SERVICES GROWING

In the past five years, have ant control services become a more or less significant portion of your location’s business?

- more significant
- no change
- less significant
- cannot compare; not involved five years ago



ARE INVASIVES GAINING GROUND?

Are invasive ants a growing problem in your location’s market area?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 269

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The PCT 2021 State of the Ant Control Market survey was sponsored by Syngenta and compiled by Readex, a privately held research firm in Stillwater, Minn. A sample of 3,921 pest control company owners, operators, executives and technical directors was systematically selected from the PCT database. Data was collected from 280 respondents — a 7 percent response rate — via an online survey from Jan. 13-25, 2021. The margin of error for percentages is plus or minus 5.6 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. Charts may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

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