
PHARAOH ANT

Monomorium pharaonis

Found throughout NZ;
named for mistaken
belief that this ant was
one of Egypt's plagues
during the time of the
pharaohs



Workers are the same
size, 1.5 mm long with a
pale, yellowish to reddish body and darker abdomen, an unevenly rounded profile, stinger
and 12-segmented antennae with a three-segmented club

Nests inside warm, humid areas near food and water sources; common in commercial
buildings; of concern in hospitals where they will enter patient wounds, IV bottles and tubes;
can carry more than a dozen pathogenic bacteria

Nests are difficult to find as they tend to be hidden in wall voids and behind baseboards

An aggressive scavenger with a generalist diet, forming conspicuous trails in buildings.
Colonies with up to 300 000 workers with multiple queens. Colonies are unstructured and very
mobile; workers, along with larvae, pupae, and even a few queens, may move to new locations
if disturbed or if the colony becomes too large, or conditions become unsuitable . Queens live
less than a year and workers are sterile.

Not found outside in temperate regions but survives in favourable microhabitats. Nests in
household structures in any available cavity such as wall and cabinet voids, behind
baseboards, behind refrigerator insulation, inside hollow curtain rods, or in the folds of sheets,
clothes, or paper . Generally inhabits only the best heated buildings, such as hospitals and
homes with children where elevated temperatures are maintained throughout winter .

Reported as a major domestic pest internationally for well over a century, principally for its
ability to "get into things". Rarely stings, but appears in huge numbers in kitchens, frequently
infests rooms in homes and hospitals . Gnaws through packaging of food and infests contents.
Transports pathogenic microbes in hospitals and there have been attacks on eyelids of infants,
causing cutaneous lesions on premature new-borns .

Reported as difficult to eradicate from buildings and survives most conventional household
pest control treatment . The spraying of a colony only causes budding to occur so this species
is controlled almost exclusively with various baits. Methoprene granular baits appear to be
effective in controlling colonies .