



ANTS



Ants are probably the best known of all insects. They can be found on almost every land mass on the planet. Their colonies can be as small as a few dozen or as large as hundreds of thousands.

Although there are over 12 000 different species they are all recognizable as ants. All have elbowed antennae. All have a spine that narrows dramatically at the center which is called the petiole. This connects the thorax to the abdomen (chest to bottom).

Ant colonies contain three basic castes or types of ant (worker, queen and male). Queens have wings and are much larger than the other ants. Males also have wings but they are smaller. Workers are wingless females, larger than males and the most common member of the colony.

New ant colonies are formed when males and queens fly away to mate. After mating, the male dies. The queen sheds her wings and finds a suitable place to make a nest. Ants can nest in holes in the ground, hollow logs, beneath stones, in hollow stems of plants or even in fruit.

The queen looks after the first batch of eggs and the larvae that hatches from them. When these ants become adults the queen is free to do nothing but lay eggs and mate for the rest of her life. After the colony is well established, more males and queens are produced. When they are mature, they fly away to mate and form new colonies.

Answer the following questions in full sentences.

1. How many different species of ants are there?
2. What are the three types of ants found in every ant colony?
3. Which ants have wings?
4. Where do ants build nests?
5. When does the Queen shed her wings?
6. Why do you think she does this?
7. Which caste of ant do you think will live the longest? Why?
8. What does larvae mean?
9. What dangers do worker ants face?
10. Draw a picture of a queen, male and worker ant. Keep in mind their different sizes.

