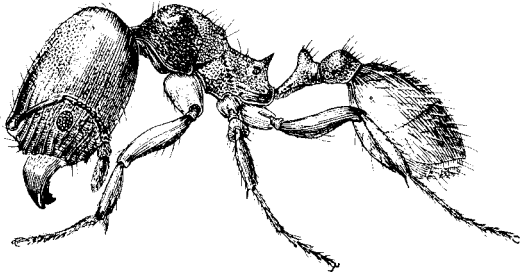


# BIG-HEADED ANT



## • AT A GLANCE •

- Two nodes
- Worker size: 1/6 to 1/8 inch (1.5 to 3.5 mm)
- Uneven shape of thorax
- 12 antennal segments, 3-segmented club
- One pair of spines on thorax
- Light brown to dark reddish brown

**ID Tip.** Big-headed ants have two distinct sizes of workers—major workers and minor workers. Major workers are easily recognized by having *very large heads* in proportion to their bodies.

**Feeding Habits.** Big-headed ants feed on live and dead insects, seeds and the honeydew produced by homopterous insects (e.g., aphids, mealybugs and scale insects). In houses, they seem to prefer protein foods, such as meats and peanut butter, but will also feed on greases and sweets, such as fruit juices.

**Key Inspection Tips.** Big-headed ants forage in trails of a few up to hundreds of workers. These trails can usually be located without too much difficulty along sidewalks and foundations and up the extension sides of buildings.

*Inside:* Big-headed ants trail along baseboards and are commonly found foraging under the edges of carpets. When these ants are found indoors, an attempt should be made to follow the foraging workers back to the site where the colony is located. If the ants are entering and exiting from under the wall, an inspection outside along the foundation is necessary to see if the ants inside are coming from a colony located outdoors.

*Outside:* Grass or other vegetation should be pulled or raked away from the foundation of the building and along driveways and sidewalks. Colonies are often found in the soil beneath the grass next to the building's foundation, and this is one of the first areas that should be checked. Big-headed ants also will nest and forage under the grass line along sidewalks and patios where they cannot be seen. Mulch should be raked back from the bases of trees and shrubs to check for ant colonies. Items in contact with the soil, such as logs, stones, firewood and other debris, should be lifted to check for colonies.

**Contributing Conditions.** As with most ants, moisture is a limiting factor in the survival of big-headed ants. If conditions exist which result in excess moisture (e.g., poor foundation drainage or water leaks), they should be corrected. As many cracks in the exterior walls as possible need to be sealed.

If possible, a vegetation-free border should be installed around the base of the foundation to make the area less attractive to ants and to make inspections of the foundation easier. This vegetation-free border should contain gravel or small stones over plastic sheeting and not bark chips or mulch.

Items under which big-headed ants could nest should be removed. These items include boards, bricks, stones and logs. Firewood should be stored off the ground and as far from the structure as possible. ■