

A NEW PEST PROBLEM? AN INFESTATION OF GHOST ANTS *TAPINOMA MELANOCEPHALUM* IN SOUTH LONDON

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An exotic ant infestation reported in a multi-occupancy block in South London was identified as Ghost Ant *Tapinoma melanocephalum*. This species causes problems in Florida, USA where it is now the most common house-infesting ant. Although there are superficially some similarities to Pharaoh's Ant, *Monomorium pharaonis*, there are key differences in the appearance, biology and behaviour of *Tapinoma melanocephalum*. A number of infestations have now been recorded in the UK and some populations are still surviving despite a range of treatments which have been attempted by different pest control contractors. In one case, a methoprene treatment was not successful despite the worker ants apparently eating large quantities of bait. At another site, mixed success has been achieved with hydramethlynon bait stations, survival being possibly due to some of the workers not being attracted to the baits. More success has been reported by one local authority by a return to a boric acid based bait although the ants seem to have erratic preferences for either sweet or protein based baits. There are serious implications for the future spread of this new UK pest and there is a need for more information on its biology and to evaluate the performance of control strategies.

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