

# HOUSE-INFESTING ANTS OF THE EASTERN UNITED STATES:

**Their Recognition, Biology, and Economic Importance**

By Marion R. Smith,<sup>1</sup> *entomologist, Entomology Research Division, Agricultural Research Service*

## INTRODUCTION

Each year numerous requests for information on the identification and control of house-infesting ants are received by various Federal and State agencies, colleges and universities, boards of health, and pest-control operators. Individuals in these organizations who handle such requests find themselves greatly handicapped because of the lack of comprehensive literature dealing with common house-infesting ants. Often they are unable to identify the ants either to genus or species. This bulletin has been prepared to take care of some of the needs of technical and semitechnical workers. However, no attempt has been made to cover the highly specialized field of ant control. Originally, I had hoped to include all house-infesting ants of the United States. Because of the lack of knowledge of these ants in several regions, especially western North America, it was thought best to include only ants of the eastern United States. However, many of the ants discussed occur also in the Western States.

In this bulletin I have furnished keys to species, based on workers of all the well-known, house-infesting ants of the eastern United States. Each species is fully described and figured, and its biology and economic importance discussed. I have also given the available common names of the species (including those approved by the Entomological Society of America); stated whether the ant was introduced, and if so, its probable original home; outlined its range of distribution, especially in the United States; and indicated whether it has been confused with other species. Technical terms are given in a glossary. Important references are listed under each species and also in the bibliography. Because the biology of only a very few ants has been intensively studied, much of the information given is based on miscellaneous observations. Although the bulletin deals primarily with ants as house pests, every way in which a species is known to be inimical to man is also mentioned.

When ants infest a house, they may be represented by workers, females, or males, or any possible combination of these castes. Since the worker is the most common, troublesome, and best known, this bulletin deals with it only.

Smith (1943) presents a means of identifying males to genus, and Creighton (1950), of females and workers to species. However, the identification of males and females to species is a difficult task and is not generally recommended.

<sup>1</sup> Retired.