

Ant Infestation in Nest-boxes - Emergency Nest Change only

Directions for Emergency Nest Change for severe Ant infestation, by using the most benign but effective method as described below.

Always wear gloves and a face mask when working around nest boxes.

List of items you will need to get started:

A small plastic spoon for nestlings that are very small. Cinnamon, a spatula or wide putty knife and a soft brush. A small box with a lid/cover, (small shoe box would work) a new clean nest made of soft grasses or pine needles. (Unused nests abandoned by birds are really great to use) optional, soft small cloth. Having items ready and handy before starting is the key to quick effective nest changes.

1. Wearing your gloves and mask, carefully open the nest box and slide putty knife or spatula under the entire nest and use your other hand or a soft cloth to carefully cover the babies and lift the nest out of the box and carefully place it in the box and cover with lid or cloth. The darkness will keep the babies calm and prevent them from trying to leave the nest. Now you are ready to address the nest box.

2. Use brush to remove and scrape off all ants in the nest box, they will be crawling all around at this point since their colony has been disrupted. Brush the ants out of the inside of the nest box and also the outside getting as many as possible, while still working as quickly as possible. Generously sprinkle cinnamon on the floor of the nest box, then add the new clean nest and press a cup shaped depression into it as best as possible. You are now ready to put nestlings box into the nest box.

3. One baby/nestling at a time. Use the plastic spoon for very small nestlings. For larger nestlings that cannot fit into the spoon, you will have to pick them up very gently but securely with your own fingers to inspect and put back into the box. Again, one at a time. Lift the lid to the box and remove one baby, cover the box back up to protect the others. Inspect the baby and gently brush off any ants and put the baby back into the newly installed nest (close the nest box door if you think the baby will jump or fall out. Go back and remove the next baby and repeat this process until all babies are back into their nest box with their new ant free nest. Discard the ant infested old nest far away from the nest box.

4. Now that the nest change has been completed, you must prevent the ants from returning to the nest box by blocking the path with a barrier they will not cross. Many use a product called Ant Fortress on poles under baffles only, or a product called Terro but again, only under the baffle. At the very least, use cinnamon at the base of the pole and on the pole itself to prevent the ants from reentering, until you can purchase a product to block them like the two mentioned. For nest boxes that are not protected by baffles, products that could cause harm to birds should never be used. Also, please consider moving the nest box to a free standing pole with a predator baffle.