蟻禅

the keyant

the keyant. ikon60. solid ant-shaped keyring made out of 4mm stainless steel

ants are among the most amazing and fascinating creatures in the world. they are all social and live in large groups of mostly sterile sisters who work to raise the offspring of their mother, the queen. there are almost 9,000 known species of ant in the world and they have a wide variety of lifestyles. for instance the giant australian bull ants which can be over 2.5 cms long, live very simple lives and the queens and workers look very similar. in contrast the leaf cutting ants of central and south america have a much more complicated social structure in their nests. there can be 3 or 4 different sizes of workers as well as large soldiers, males and giant queens and gynes. ants are amazingly successful creatures, on the ivory coast in africa there can be as many as 7,500 colonies of ants per hectare, with an average of around 2,850 ants per colony this adds up 20,000,000 ants per hectare or 2,000 per square metre. some scientists have estimated that if you weighed up all the animals in the amazon basin ants would make up about 30% of the total, and though they are not this successful everywhere it is considered that they might make up as much as 10% of the total animal biomass of the world. like all insects, ants have six legs. each leg has three joints. the legs of the ant are very strong so they can run very quickly. if a man could run as fast for his size as an ant can, he could run as fast as a racehorse. ants can lift 20 times their own body weight. an ant brain has about 250,000 brain cells. a human brain has 10,000 million so a colony of 40,000 ants has collectively the same size brain as a human. the average life expectancy of an ant is about 40-60 days. ants use their antenae not only for touch, but also for their sense of smell. the head of the ant has a pair of large, strong jaws. the jaws open and shut sideways like a pair of scissors. adult ants cannot chew and swallow solid food. instead they swallow the juice which they squeeze from pieces of food. they throw away the dry part that is left over. the common black ants and wood ants have no sting, but they can squirt a spray of formic acid. some birds put ants in their feathers because the ants squirt formic acid which gets rid of the parasites. the slave-maker ant (polyergus rufescens) raids the nests of other ants and steals their pupae. when these new ants hatch,they work as slaves within the colony. the worker ants keep the eggs and larvae in different groups according to ages. the ant has two eyes, each eye is made of many smaller eyes. they are called compound eyes. the abdomen of the ant contains two stomachs. one stomach holds the food for itself and second stomach is for food to be shared with other ants. like all insects, the outside of their body is covered with a hard armour this is called the exoskeleton. ants have four distinct growing stages, the egg, larva, pupa and the adult. biologists classify ants as a special group of wasps. (hymenoptera formicidae) there are over 10000 known species of ants. each ant colony has at least one or more queens. the job of the queen is to lay eggs which the worker ants look after. worker ants are sterile, they look for food, look after the young, and defend the nest from unwanted visitors. ants are clean and tidy insects. some worker ants are given the job of taking the rubbish from the nest and putting it outside in a special rubbish dump! each colony of ants has its own smell. in this way, intruders can be recognized immediately. many ants such as the common red species have a sting which they use to defend their nest. the army ant (ecitron burchelli) of south america, can have as many as 700,000 members in its colony. the leaf cutter ants are farmers. they cut out pieces of leaves which they take back to their nests. they chew them into a pulp and a special fungus grows it. ants cannot digest leaves because they cannot digest cellulose. at night the worker ants move the eggs and larvae deep into the nest to protect them from the cold. during the daytime, the worker ants move the eggs and larvae of the colony to the top of the nest so that they can be warmer. if a worker ant has found a good source for food, it leaves a trail of scent so that the other ants in the colony can find the food. army ants are nomadic and they are always moving. they carry their larvae and their eggs with them in a long column. egg: ant eggs are oval shaped and tiny (they are on the order of 1 mm long, but the queen's egg is many times larger). larva: the worm-like larvae have no eyes and no legs; they eat food regurgitated by adult ants. the larvae molt (shed their skin) many times as they increase in size. pupa: after reaching a certain size, the larva spins a silk-like cocoon around itself (against a solid object, like the wall of the chamber) and pupates. during this time the body metamorphoses (changes) into its adult form. adult: the pupa emerges as an adult. the entire life cycle usually lasts from 6 to 10 weeks. some queens can live over 15 years, and some workers can live for up to 7 years. some ant species feed on a wide variety of food items, while others typically feed on a rather narrow range of foods, with food preferences changing significantly during the course of a season, (especially for outdoor species, or depending on the specific needs of the colony). periods of high egg production require foraging ants to bring back proteins to the queen, or queens, while at other times foragers may prefer to gather sugars or greases for their own energy needs or to promote larval growth. adults are unable to ingest hard, solid food particles and ingest only liquids which are sucked from the food material or from smaller particles in suspension. foraging ants bring food or water back to the colony and pass it on to other nest-tending workers by a mouth to mouth process called trophallaxis. nest tending workers then pass the food items along to larvae or the queens and often the larvae are stimulated to regurgitate liquid food to be further used and distributed among the members of the colony. in nature, many ants obtain sugar by feeding on the sugary honeydew excreted by aphids or other sucking insects found on plants. these aphids are often tended and protected, as we would dairy cattle, by the ants as a food resource, thus, controlling aphids and other sugar producing insects is a good way to help control ant populations. dead insects, earthworms, and other organisms are fair game for the dinner table of ants and even live insects may be preyed upon. some ants, such as leaf-cutting ants, actually cut, strip, and carry away plant leaf tissue. this leaf material is carried into the nest mound and used as a host for fungus growth. this fungus is then used as food by the colony.

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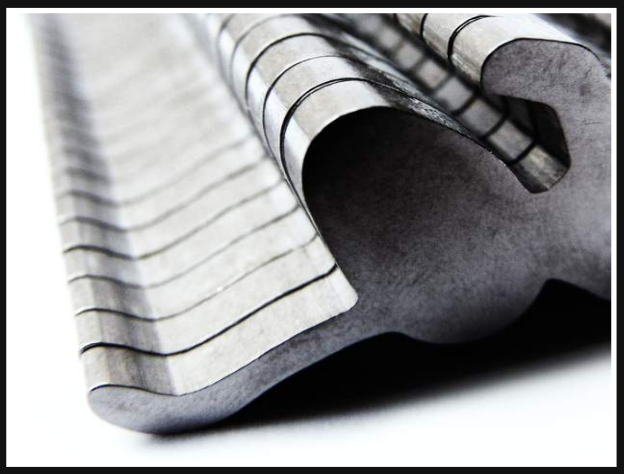

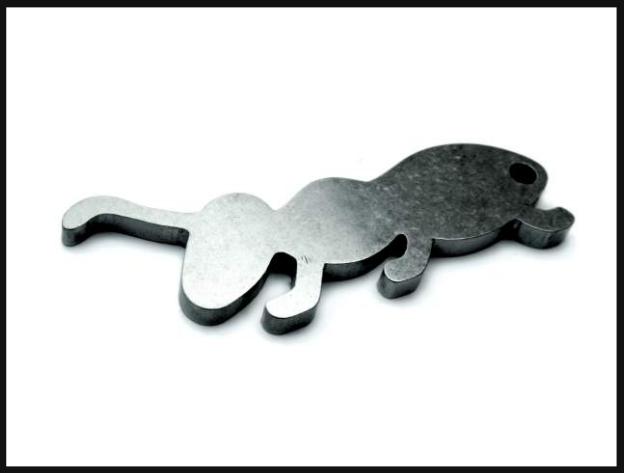

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