

Ants Absorb Detectable Levels of Phthalates

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Researchers have found that ants' exoskeletons absorb phthalates from the surrounding environment.

By *Erin Weaver*

Scientists in France suggest that ants can serve as bio-indicators of phthalate pollution, after finding the plasticizers in the insects' exoskeletons and internal tissues. In the study, published in *Science of the Total Environment*, ants from various locations in Europe and Africa tested positive for the presence of phthalates even when the insects were known never to have had direct contact with plastic.

Ants kept in a closed, phthalate-free box showed steady amounts of the chemicals over time, while those kept in open boxes showed increasing quantities of phthalates. This indicates the chemicals were absorbed from the surrounding air; phthalates are known to enter the environment as the plastic items containing them—such as [vinyl flooring](#)—deteriorate. The researchers found similar results when testing crickets and honeybees.

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