

Widespread Phthalates Pollution Causing Reproductive Issues in Ants

By Leigh Kim on January 11, 2013

Scientists have recently discovered that phthalates are present in ants. Leading expert Alain Lenoir, a researcher at François Rabelais University in Tours, France, who has been studying ants since 1968, found something unexpected. His analysis revealed the presence of plastic additives called phthalates, a key additive in vinyl, in ants – and not just in a few specimens – all of them.

Despite the origin of the ants, every single one of the ants Lenoir and his team studied were contaminated with phthalates. Lenoir and his team studied ants that were collected in a field near Tours and they studied laboratory ants kept in a plastic box that had never been around phthalates. Regardless of origin, the amount of phthalates present in the air and on the ants' cuticles was the same.

Currently, Lenoir and his team are trying to determine the long term effects of phthalate contamination on ants, but they have observed the reproductive capabilities of queen ants are decreased when phthalates are placed on their abdomens.

Naturally, the question arises, if phthalates have negative effects on ants, what is the effect of humans? More research is needed to truly assess the public health effects in the general human population.

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