

TEXTO

'Heroic ants' face death alone

Ants live altruistically, but some die altruistically too.

When ants of the species *Temnothorax unifasciatus* get sick, they abandon their nest, walking far away from their relatives to die alone.

They perform this act of heroism to prevent the illness that is killing them from spreading to the colony.

The discovery, published in *Current Biology*, is the first time that such behaviour has been shown in ants or any other social insect.

Professor Jurgen Heinze and PhD student Bartosz Walter decided to investigate the ants' behaviour after becoming interested in anecdotal reports of dying individuals deserting their families.

The workers left the nest voluntarily and were not carried away

Dr Michel Chapuisat University of Lausanne

Such behaviour has been reported in dogs, cats, elephants and even people.

But because it happens occasionally, it cannot be quantifiably studied.

So Prof Heinze decided to set up an experiment to study the phenomenon in ants, which he also noticed would occasionally leave the colony for no apparent reason.

The researchers exposed a colony of *Temnothorax unifasciatus* ants reared in their laboratory to the spores of a lethal parasitic fungus called *Metarhizium anisopliae*.

Most of the workers who died from the fungal infection permanently left the nest hours or days before death, and died in a foraging area far from their nest mates.

"Our study suggests that infected ants at least in some species walk away from a colony and die alone, rather than risk infecting others," Prof Heinze told the BBC.

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'Heroic ants' face death alone

Ants live altruistically, but some die altruistically too.

As formigas vivem altruisticamente, mas algumas morrem altruisticamente.

When ants of the species *Temnothorax unifasciatus* get sick, they abandon their nest, walking far away from their relatives to die alone.

Quando as formigas da espécie *Temnothorax unifasciatus* ficam doentes, elas abandonam seu ninho^(=nest), caminhando para longe de suas companheiras para morrerem sozinhas.

They perform this act of heroism to prevent the illness that is killing them from spreading to the colony.

Elas executam^(=perform) este ato de heroísmo para prevenir que a doença que as estão matando se espalhe para o resto da colônia.

The discovery, published in Current Biology, is the first time that such behaviour has been shown in ants or any other social insect.

A descoberta, publicada no Current Biology, mostra pela primeira vez estas maneiras^(=behaviour) que estão sendo mostradas nas formigas ou em quaisquer outros insetos sociais.

Professor Jurgen Heinze and PhD student Bartosz Walter decided to investigate the ants' behaviour after becoming interested in anecdotal reports of dying individuals deserting their families.

O professor Jurgen Heinze e o estudante de PhD Bartosz Walter decidiram investigar as maneiras das formigas após se interessarem em relatórios anedóticos de moribundos individuais que desertam de suas famílias.

The workers left the nest voluntarily and were not carried away

Such behaviour has been reported in dogs, cats, elephants and even people.

Algumas maneiras tinham sido relatadas em cachorros, gatos, elefantes e em pessoas.

But because it happens occasionally, it cannot be quantifiably studied.

Mas porque isso acontece ocasionalmente, isso não pode ser determinadamente estudado.

So Prof Heinze decided to set up an experiment to study the phenomenon in ants, which he also noticed would occasionally leave the colony for no apparent reason.

Então o Professor Heinze decidiu iniciar um experimento para estudar o fenômeno nas formigas, as quais ele também observou que poderiam deixar a colônia sem nenhuma razão aparente.

The researchers exposed a colony of *Temnothorax unifasciatus* ants reared in their laboratory to the spores of a lethal parasitic fungus called *Metarhizium anisopliae*.

Os pesquisadores expuseram a colônia das formigas *Temnothorax unifasciatus* criadas em laboratório a germes letais do fungo parasita chamado *Metarhizium anisopliae*.

Most of the workers who died from the fungal infection permanently left the nest hours or days before death, and died in a foraging area far from their nest mates.

Muitas das trabalhadoras que morreram da infecção do fungo permanentemente deixavam o ninho horas ou dias antes da morte, e morriam em uma área distante do ninho de suas companheiras.

"Our study suggests that infected ants at least in some species walk away from a colony and die alone, rather than risk infecting others," Prof Heinze told the BBC.

“Nosso estudo sugere que formigas infectadas pelos menos em algumas espécies caminham para fora da colônia e morrem sozinhas, antes de infectarem as outras”, disse o Professor Heinze para a BBC.