

Pest Gazette

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TERMITES

Damage, Destruction and Termites



Gary Packer, Owner

Did you know ... that more than 600,000 U.S. homes suffer from termite damage totaling more than \$5 billion annually?

This is more than the damage caused by all fires, earthquakes, and most natural disasters combined. More than 2 million homes require termite treatment each year. Homeowners insurance can help recover losses from fires, floods and earthquakes, but it is almost impossible to get insurance against termites.

Finding out your home has termites can scare most homeowners. You typically can't see them, you can't hear them and frequently only a trained inspector can find signs of an infestation. Treatment

by the homeowner for the control of termites is virtually impossible. Specialized equipment is used and only experts have the necessary knowledge for effective control. A trained termite control specialist can provide protection from termite infestation.

Termites are found in almost every state as well as Mexico and parts of Canada. They eat wood and may also destroy paper products such as books, cardboard boxes, furniture, and various other items. Even buildings with steel framing and masonry walls are targets because of the wooden doors, window frames, support beams, cabinets and shelving.

To learn more about how we can develop a termite management plan best suited to your situation, call us, your trained pest professionals, today.

Termites 411: What's Eating My House?

Have you noticed large numbers of little flying insects in or around your home? How about "vein-like," muddy-looking tubes about the diameter of a pencil somewhere in your home? Tunnel-like holes in your wooden siding? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you may have subterranean termites.

Subterranean termites are soil residing, social and colonial insects. A termite soil nest can be as much as 20 feet below the surface in order to shelter it from weather extremes. Termites travel through soil-type or "mud" tubes to obtain food sources above the ground. A mature termite colony has a three-caste system made up of reproductive

kings and queens, soldiers, and workers. A colony reaches maturity in four to five years. Winged kings and queens from a mature colony emerge in what is called a nuptial flight, mating flight, or swarm.

Winged kings and queens are dark brown to brownish-black and have two pairs of equal size wings extending well beyond the ends of their bodies. Swarms of termites are commonplace in spring and fall, particularly after a rain. Upon flight, winged males and females land on the ground and break-off their wings. Wingless males and females form pairs and begin to search for sources of wood or food as well as moisture in soil. Once food and

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worker termite



queen surrounded
by smaller worker
termites



soldier



winged swarms



termite damage

Termites (continued from page 1)

moisture are located, the royal couple digs a chamber or royal cell, enters the chamber, and seals the opening. After mating, the queen starts placing eggs. A queen may survive 25 years, laying tens of thousands of eggs. The eggs are yellowish-white and hatch after about 50 to 60 days.

Worker termites are soft-bodied, creamy-white, wingless, and blind. As immatures, they are fed regurgitated food by the king and queen. Once able to digest wood, workers provide food for the entire termite colony. Worker termites take on all the labor which includes obtaining food, feeding other termites and immatures, excavating wood, and building tunnels. Worker termites mature within a year or so, and live up to five years.

Soldiers are creamy white, soft-bodied, wingless, and blind. The head of the soldier is elongated, brownish, hard, and equipped with two jaws. Soldiers must be fed by workers because they are incapable of feeding on their own. There are far less soldiers within the colony than workers and their only job is to defend the colony against invaders. Soldiers mature within a year and live up to five years.

Subterranean termites feed only on wood and wood-containing materials or cellulose. Termites have microbes in their guts which allow digestion of cellulose. Mutual exchange of foods enhances recognition of colony members. Termites are soft-bodied insects, with hard, saw-toothed jaws working like shears. They are able to bite off small pieces of wood, one piece at a time.

Termites often infest homes and cause damage to lumber, wood panels, flooring, drywall, wallpaper, plastics, and many paper products. Serious damage can result over a long period of time or potential loss of a home's structural strength. In addition, losses can include flooring, carpeting, art, books, clothing, furniture, and valuable papers. Subterranean termites will feed on dead parts of trees, but are not thought to attack live trees.

Termite communication is partially through the secretion of chemicals called pheromones. Individual termite colonies develop their own specific odors. An intruder into the colony is immediately recognized. An alarm pheromone is secreted, and tells the soldier termites to attack.

During foraging, when a worker termite finds a new source of food, it recruits other termites by placing a pheromone trail. The number of termites within each caste populating the colony is regulated chemically. Nymphs or immatures can develop into workers, soldiers, or reproductive adults, depending on the colony requirements.

Sound is another means of termite communication. Soldiers and workers can strike their heads against the tunnels, producing vibrations that are perceived by others within the colony. These sounds can serve to mobilize the colony to defend itself against enemies.

What to Look For

Now that you have the termite basics, you can be a termite detective in and around your home. To be sure of your clues, partner with your pest management professional. A certified pest inspector should inspect both the interior and exterior surfaces of the foundation, especially where wood is in contact or near the soil.

Termite damage can be located by probing wood with a tool, such as a screwdriver or knife. Start your inspection in the basement with a bright flashlight. Look for mud or shelter tubes and live or dead insects as well as

their wings. Mud tubes are evidence of termite activity. Areas that you should inspect also include wood construction in the basement and crawlspaces, sills, joists, support posts, basement window frames, under porches, hollow block areas, cracks in the cement or brick construction and expansion joints, exterior frames of basement windows, wood on the ground, fence posts, and tree stumps.

Termite damaged wood has remains of mud inside wood galleries or tunnels in an irregular pattern. Tunnels can contain broken mud particles with fecal materials. In an active colony, creamy-white termite workers may be found within infested wood.

The presence of flying king and queen termites or their shed wings inside your home indicates an infestation. In addition, mud or shelter tubes extending from ground level to woodwork or foundation walls indicates infestation. Termite workers travel via shelter tubes to their nest to obtain moisture and perform feeding or other termites. A mud tube is approximately the diameter of a lead pencil.



source: actionpestandwildlife.com

Call in the Pros

There is no need to be worried if termite activity is found in your home and termite treatment is required. Termites work quite slowly and your home will not be extensively damaged or collapse overnight.

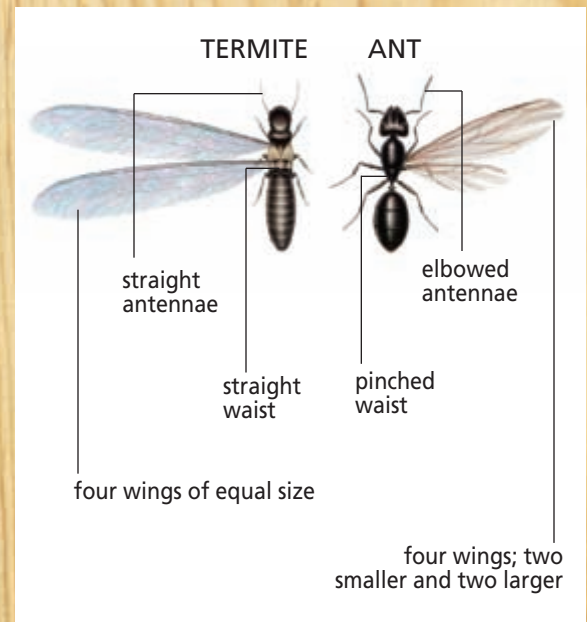
If you hire a professional pest management company, obtain two or more treatment estimates. You must obtain a service plan that indicates the locations of termite activity and the treatment method. Information in writing must be provided regarding liability insurance, treatment procedures, any repairs, warranties, copies of insecticide labels, and other applicable information. Compare the quality of your bids and their process before making decisions.

Tools that your pest management professional inspector may employ include a moisture meter, acoustical emission device, boroscope and video probe, infrared camera, microwave motion detector, and termite-sniffing dog. Your inspector will be able to determine if termites are active or not, approximately how old the activity or damage may be, and if treatment is required.

There are many pests that you may decide to try and control on your own, but termites should not be one of them. Contact us today! ■

TERMITES VS. ANTS

Flying ants and flying termites are difficult to visually tell apart. Termites have pretty straight, "beadlike" antennae while ants have antennae with an elbow. Termites have two pairs of wings, almost equal in both length and size. Ants have two pairs of wings, but are of unequal size. The ant's front wings are larger than the hind wings. A termite's abdomen is joined broadly to the thorax or chest while the abdomen and thorax of an ant are joined by a narrow sort of waist. Ants are good fliers; termites are clumsy fliers.



WHAT'S EATING ME?

Bed bugs are tiny. Really tiny. And they like to stay hidden so you might not be able to find them on your own. But, if you wake up every morning with welts like these, you may have an infestation. Call us to schedule a thorough inspection.



Bed Bugs 411: What's Eating Me?

Have you noticed little red marks on you after waking in the morning? How about little bugs crawling around on your bed? If the answers to either or both these questions are yes, you may now be asking, "What's eating me?"

You may not like the answer, because you may have bed bugs. Bed bugs are brown to reddish-brown after a blood feeding with an oval and flattened top to bottom shape. They are about the size of an apple seed.

Bed bugs have a "stay-hidden" behavior, are active at night, and venture out to feed on your blood. These bugs are hearty little critters and can live more than a year without a blood meal. Bed bugs do not result from poor sanitation or social status, but are spread as we go about our various daily concerns. They are not limited to the bed or the bedroom, but eventually move throughout your home. Bed bugs will crawl considerable distances to obtain a blood meal.

What to Look For

Bed bugs hide in small spaces, cracks, and crevices near where you lounge, rest, and sleep. They can be found behind baseboards, upholstery and in any kind of furniture. You need to check wall-hangings, night stands, stuffed furniture, floor-board cracks, behind loose wallpaper, light switches, window treatments, and door and window frames. If an infestation is heavy, bed bugs may be found in wall voids, attics, and enclosed places.

The most effective inspections are conducted by your certified pest management professional. They can see signs of a bed bug infestation without actually seeing any bed bugs. Signs of infestation include small reddish-brown fecal spots on surfaces and sometimes a very sweet odor. Bug bites may also be indicators. If you wake up each morning with bites then you may have bed bugs. If you have bites that occur at different times of the day and in various locations such as at home, in your car, or at work, it is much less likely the cause is bed bugs.

How Did They Get Here?

Bed bugs can enter your home inside used furniture or from a visitor who has bed bugs in their home. Bed bugs can also stow away in suitcases, backpacks, and shoes. Even occasional travelers have been known to bring bed bugs home with

them but there are steps you can take to minimize the risk. Check hotel bedding, mattress, and box-springs for blood spots. Keep your suitcase on the rack provided, not on the bed or floor. When you return home from travel, vacuum your luggage well.

Bed bugs have not been proven to spread disease through their bites. Not all people react the same to bed bug bites and some even have delayed reactions to the bites. Bites can appear in several rows. If you have a reaction to bites, there are generally red, itchy welts present.

An actual bed bug sighting or a sample of a bed bug or egg is needed to be certain that you have an infestation or activity. Bed bug bites or symptoms might be clues, but cannot determine certainty of bed bug presence.

Call in the Pros

It may be possible to reduce bed bug populations in your home, but it is virtually impossible to eliminate every bug without the services of a pest management professional. If even *one* adult female survives, your home could become re-infested. Sleeping in a different room or vacating the structure is not a solution, and can make the problem more difficult to eliminate.

There are many pests that you may decide to try and control on your own, but bed bugs should not be one of them. Call a professional pest management company. When working with a pest management company that offers a guarantee, you should ask what the guarantee covers. Are you guaranteed complete bed bug elimination? How long is the guarantee? Most guarantees will be limited to a period of time, or if a preventative program, will be ongoing with a service agreement.

Now that you have the bed bug basics, get rid of what's eating you. Contact us today and we'll have a pest management professional come out to your account. ■

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