

# PestGazette



## Today's Termites Equal Tomorrow's Tragedies

Spring is the season for termites — the time of year when you are most likely to see these aggravating and costly pests burrow deep into the depths of your home. In this issue of the *Pest Gazette* we want to educate you about termites and similar pests that cause you destruction and headaches. Regardless of whether or not you are currently experiencing termite damage; it is imperative that you

understand how to recognize and prevent these ravaging beasts. In this edition you will learn about the termite, warehouse beetle and warning signs that signal it's time to contact your pest management professional so they can prevent damage to your house. ■



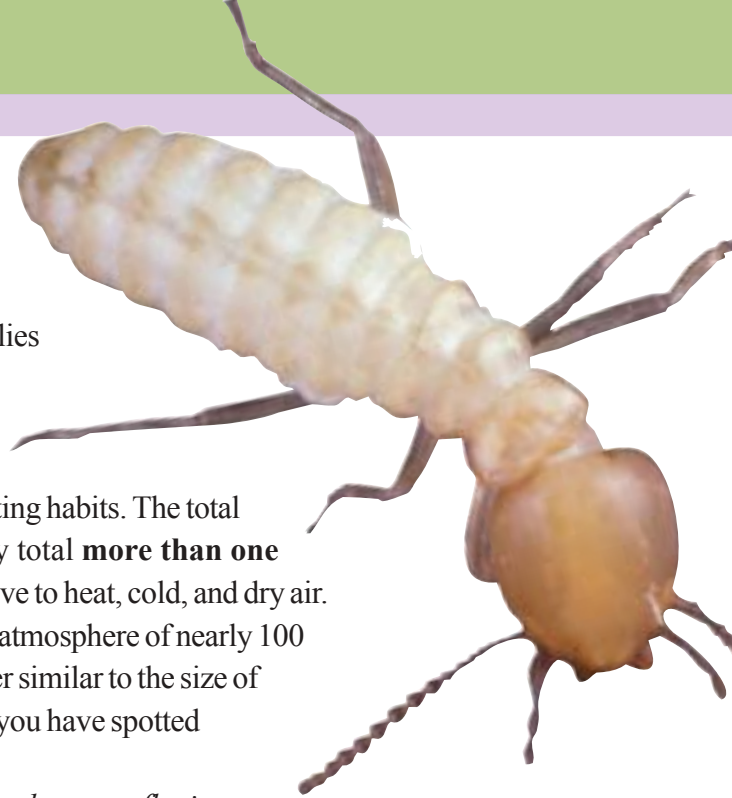
## Costly Critters

The annual price tag associated with costs to treat subterranean termites and repair preventable damage exceeds over \$2 billion annually in the U.S. Termites are the most damaging structural pests, affecting 600,000 homes. The majority of insurance coverage prevents against loss to fires, storms and earthquakes; however, it's almost impossible to carry insurance against termite infestation. Your termite control specialist is your best bet to avoiding expensive termite damage. Termites, found in almost every state, Mexico and parts of Canada, eat wood, paper products, books, cardboard, furniture, and have been known to prey on cherished family items. Buildings with steel framing and masonry walls are targets too, because of wooden doors, window frames, support beams, cabinets, or shelving within them. ■

## Knowledge is Power!

There are over 2,000 species of termites, grouped into six families that comprise the insect order *Isoptera*. Only a minority of these species are considered frequent invaders of human dwellings. The most damaging types (roughly 20 species) belong to the subterranean group, which received its name due to their nesting habits. The total number of individuals in a colony of subterranean termites may total **more than one million!** Workers are small, whitish-colored, blind and very sensitive to heat, cold, and dry air. Due to their sensitivity they build shelter or mud tubes that have an atmosphere of nearly 100 percent humidity. If you see these mud shelter tubes, with a diameter similar to the size of a pencil, contact your pest control professional and let them know you have spotted the first signs of a termite infestation

Two of these species, the Eastern Subterranean Termites, *Reticulotermes flavipes* (Kollar), and the Western Subterranean Termites, *Reticulotermes hesperus* (Banks), are by far the most common, widest distributed and most damaging in the U.S. Subterranean termites commonly live underground or in protected areas like wood galleries. There is always at least one queen present and sometimes many more “secondary reproductives.” Most people never see a queen, but may have seen swarmers or workers. ■



*“During the spring, healthy subterranean termite colonies will “swarm” or send out winged reproductive termites that are darker in color.”*

## Identifying Your Enemy

The typical termite life cycle begins with eggs, which hatch into the first active stages called “larvae.”

Workers produced from the larvae are responsible for eating wood, building tunnels and caring for the Queen. In the following stages some workers develop into soldiers who defend the colony against enemies. Other workers develop into winged swarmers — males and females that leave the colony as a swarm, and may become Queens

and Kings of new colonies. Once termite workers find a new food source, they put down a chemical signal or pheromone to lead the other workers to the feeding site. When they discover your house and invite their friends, they become a real pest and a serious problem that must be dealt with by pest control professionals. During the spring, healthy subterranean termite colonies will “swarm” or send out winged reproductive termites that are darker in color. Some species are almost black, and have four thin, equal-sized wings. If you find mud tubes, or see a swarm, call our office today to have an inspection. If you’re brave enough, keep some swarmers for us to look at and we’ll help explain a treatment program that is just right for you. ■



## How Can We Help?

Currently there are three types of termite treatments available for use by the professional: soil treatments, wood treatments, and baits.

- Soil treatments are liquid termiticides diluted with water to ensure adequate coverage on the ground. The injection of this material into the soil creates a treated area surrounding your house that repels or reduces the population of the termites that forage within that soil, and provides your house with long-term protection (usually five years). This is the most commonly used system and may be used in combination with baits and/or wood treatments.
- Wood treatments involve treating infested or potentially infested wood with properly labeled liquids, such as those

used in a traditional soil treatment, or borate materials. This treatment type protects the wood from infestation and reduces or eliminates the infestation in the wood at the time of treatment.

- Baits are relatively new and involve installing bait stations in the ground. Termites attack the wood in the bait station and carry the active ingredient throughout the colony. This in turn reduces the population of the colony while eliminating structural infestation. Baits are very popular since there is no interior drilling and the process is typically less bothersome for the homeowner.

Call us today and we'll be happy to discuss the treatments that we offer and the advantages each method provides. ■

**Homeowners should visit the National Pest Management Association at: [www.pestworld.org](http://www.pestworld.org) for additional information, including how to select a pest control firm.**



termite

## Termite vs. Ant

One frequent question pest management professionals often hear is how to tell termites from ants. Ants generally do not swarm at the same time as termites, but it *can* happen. The following is a list of ways to tell termites from ants.



carpenter ant

Termites swarm at a very limited time of the year.

The body of a termite swarmer is about 3/8" long.

Termites have four wings of equal size.

Termites have a straight waist.

Termites have straight antennae.

Termites are clumsy fliers.

Ants swarm throughout the year depending on species.

The body of an ant will vary in size depending on the species.

Ants have four wings; two smaller and two larger.

Ants have a pinched waist.

Ants have elbowed antennae.

Ants are good fliers.

## Foreign Invaders

### Formosan Termites

(*Coptotermes formosanus* Shiraki) are an exotic termite species accidentally introduced to the U.S. from China and other distant countries. Their habits are similar to those of common subterranean species and they are found in the same family. However, Formosan termites are larger, more aggressive invaders, that can form colonies in excess of two million.

They establish colonies in moist wood of upper stories of buildings and do not need soil contact if there is an adequate moisture source. They have been reported in 11 U.S. states (mostly southern coastal). If you think you might have an infestation of this species, contact a knowledgeable expert from your pest control provider to confirm the identification of these specimens. ■

## Preventative Measures You Can Take

### You can do several things as a homeowner to help prevent termite infestations:

- 1 Stack all firewood, lumber or other wooden items, several feet away from your building.
- 2 Keep all wood supports of porches, patios, decks, or separate buildings more than one foot from contact with your home's foundations; and use only pressure-treated wood for all construction touching the ground. (Remember even treated wood has a limited protection period).
- 3 Monitor and reduce moisture build-up in any crawl spaces.
- 4 Move all wood-containing mulch (even cedar or redwood) and decorative wood chips at least one foot away from your foundation. Sand and stones can be just as attractive an alternative and they discourage pests from nesting next to your building.
- 5 Repair leaking water lines and fixtures that could drip on the wooden parts of your house. Repair any eaves, downspouts, gables or shingles which expose your house to rain.
- 6 Change your outdoor lights from all white bulbs to some yellow or pale amber. This helps to reduce attraction of any night-swarming termites near your house, especially during spring. ■

## Warehouse Beetle

The Warehouse Beetle, *Trogaderma variable* Ballion, is a very important pest of stored grain products worldwide. Adults are about 1/8-inch long, rounded, brownish-black insects, with a variable mottled pattern of lighter brown small scales on their back. It often requires an expert to correctly separate this species from another one, which is a quarantined pest in many countries. These creatures feed on a wide range of materials, from grain, flour and dead insects to pasta and pollen. They develop from egg to adult in about 35-40 days and are one of the most heat-tolerant of the common grain-infesting pests.

Each larva sheds its skin five or six times, and each cast skin has more than 3,500 tiny setae (two kinds) which break off easily and can cause irritation on contact with unbroken human skin. Adults Warehouse Beetles can fly fairly well.

To control this pest, your pest management professional will do a careful survey to detect, and then discard infested foods, followed by cleaning up all spills. When needed, a properly labeled residual insecticide precisely applied to limited target spots near the infestation. Remember that these pests can thrive in dry pet foods and sometimes in stored bird seed. Recently developed pheromone products are currently available to pest management professionals to assist in surveillance. ■

