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Commissioner

State of Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Consumer Information on Drywood Termites

A Guide for Residential Homeowners

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CONSUMER INFORMATION ON DRYWOOD TERMITES

- Drywood (non-subterranean) termites as well as subterranean termites occur in Florida.
- Drywood termites infest dry wood and do not require contact with the soil. The subterranean species must nest in the soil or near a water source in order to survive.
- Signs of infestations by drywood termites and control measures differ drastically from those for subterranean termites.
- Drywood termites occur in small colonies in isolated wood pieces. Multiple colonies can infest a structure simultaneously
- Control methods include whole structure fumigation, spot treatment with insecticides, or spot heat, shock, microwave, and liquid nitrogen treatment. Heat treatments have been used as whole structure treatments.
- Drywood termites remain hidden within the wood or other material on which they feed, so they seldom seen. Fecal pellets are ejected periodically, while swarmers fly from colonized wood in late spring and summer.
- Galleries or tunnels in the wood made by drywood termites cut across the grain of the wood and destroy both soft spring wood and the harder summer growth. Galleries made by the subterranean species follow the grain of the wood and the soft spring wood is attacked first.
- Treatment of the soil under and around the structure will not protect a structure from drywood termites
- Baiting systems (such as Sentricon, First Line, Exterra) will not protect a structure from drywood termites
- Direct treatment of lumber MAY provide protection if the drywood termites must tunnel through the treatment to infest the wood.

- Signs of infestation include:
 - Winged insects emerging in evenings and night attracted to lights or TV.
 - Discarded wings accumulating around window sills or in spider webs
 - Wooden pellets (much smaller than rice grains) accumulating on floors or under furniture. These pellets are cream to reddish-brown or black. The color of the pellets is not related to the color of the wood. The pellets are about 1-2 mm long and distinctively six-sided, making them easily distinguishable from other wood-destroying organisms. Pellets usually fall into piles as the termites push them out of the infested wood.
 - A sign of advanced infestation is surface blisters. These termites sometimes tunnel close to the surface giving the wood a blistered appearance. Infestations may be detected by tapping the wood every few inches with the handle of a screwdriver. Damaged wood sounds hollow - a papery rustling sound indicates tunnels just beneath the surface.

- Winged termites can be distinguished from winged ants because termites have a thick waist, straight antennae, and equal-length wings whereas ants have a distinctly thin or wasp-like waist, elbowed antennae, and shorter hind wings than fore wings.
- Swarming (mating flights) often occur in the evening hours.
- Late Spring and Summer months are the peak season for winged drywood termite swarming flights.
- Termite protection contracts are usually for ONE type termite only. A SEPARATE contract is usually required for treatment and protection from subterranean termites and drywood termites.



Photos courtesy of Dr. R. Scheffrahn, IFAS

- The Florida Building Code does not require a preventive treatment for drywood termites for new construction. It DOES require a treatment for subterranean termites.
- Coastal and southern areas of the state are more likely to have an infestation of drywood termites occur.
- Colonies are smaller and develop over a longer period of time than do subterranean termites therefore the potential for structural damage over a given period of time is less.
- Even though colonies are slow to develop if left unchecked for extended periods of time substantial damage can occur.
- If you suspect an infestation of drywood termites make sure a positive identification is done by an experienced pest control operator.

- Drywood termites will also infest pieces of furniture (particularly antique pieces). Removal of the item and separate treatment of the piece may be all that is necessary in some instances.
- In some cases, treatment of an infestation of drywood termites may not be needed if the area of infestation can be identified and physically removed (this may or may not be practical from a structural standpoint).
- If it is determined that a drywood termite infestation is present in your home, do not panic, take the time required to collect the information needed in order to make an informed decision as to the best course of action for your situation.
- The Department recommends obtaining at least three opinions and cost estimates for treatment from properly licensed pest control companies.
- If you have technical questions or require information on a pest control company you may contact the Department's Bureau of Entomology and Pest Control at 850-617-7997 or visit the website <http://www.floridatermitehelp.org>.

DACS-P-01742
Rev (09/10)