

# PestGazette

SPRING 2009

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## Damage, Destruction and Termites

**D**id 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. ■

## Termite or Ant? How to Tell the Difference

**S**ubterranean termites mainly live underground or in protected areas such as galleries in wood. At a minimum there is always one queen, and many more "secondary reproductives" that are usually present. Most people never see a queen, but may see swarmer or workers. The total number of individuals in a colony of subterranean termites can total more than a million. Imagine a million insects attacking your house at one time!

Workers are small white insects. They are blind and very sensitive to heat, cold and dry air. This sensitivity is why they build shelter tubes or "mud tubes." In

*Winged Subterranean  
Termite Swarmer*



Call Today!

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Left: Subterranean Termite Soldier



Below Left: Subterranean Termite Worker (photo: University of Nebraska)



Above: Acrobat Ant

Left: Acrobat Ants on flower (photo: Harold Harlan)

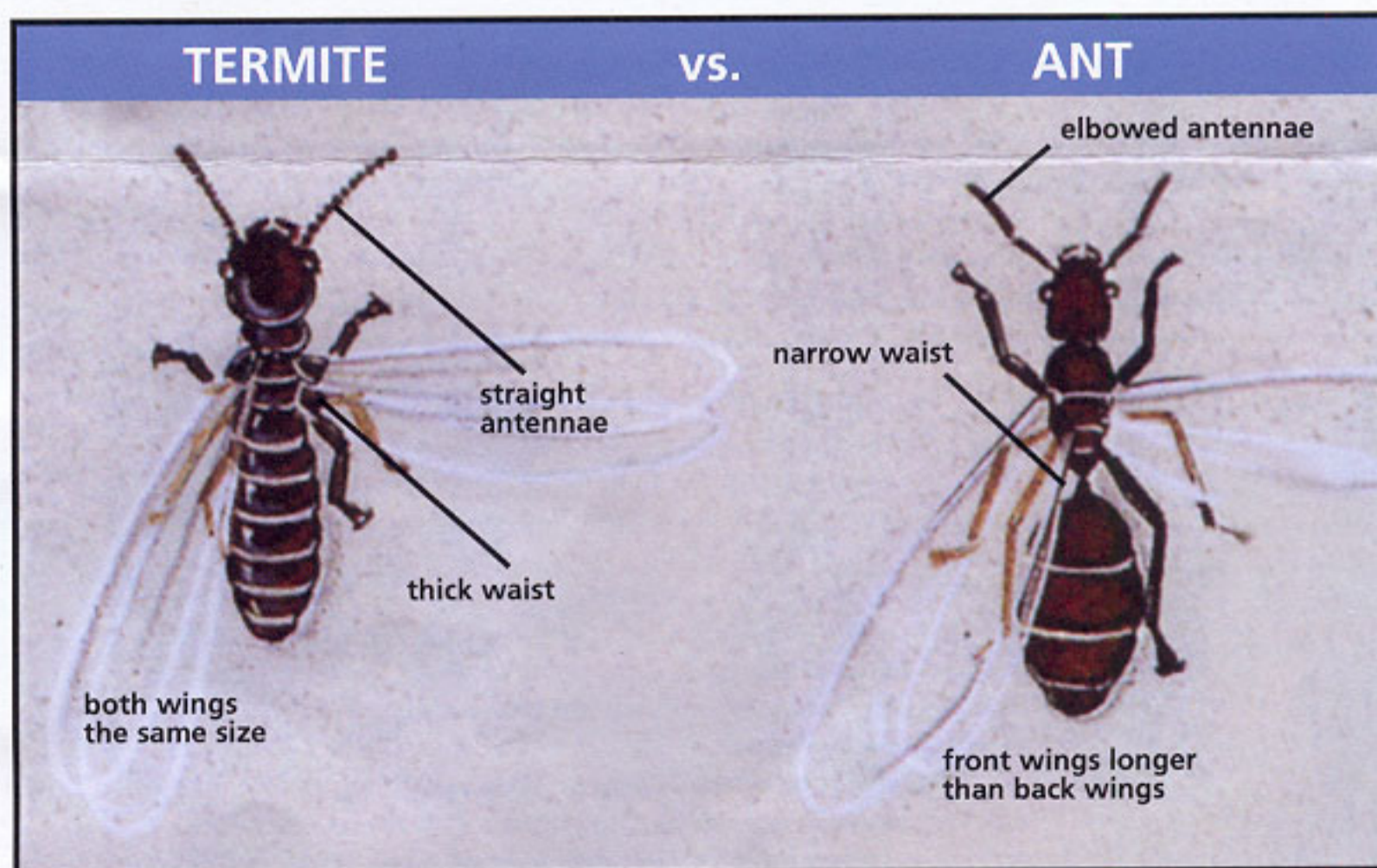


## Termite or Ant? (continued from page 1)

fact, they need to maintain an atmosphere of nearly 100 percent humidity. It is possible that if you find shelter tubes, a little smaller in diameter than a pencil, you are noticing the first sign of a termite infestation. Workers are just that, the workforce of the colony whose job it is to find new food sources such as vegetation or wood containing cellulose. Once termites find a food source they put down a chemical signal or pheromone to lead the other workers to the feeding site. They forage and find food sources,

commonly in moist areas. When they discover your house or other buildings, they become a real pest and that is when you should give us a call!

In most areas of the country, depending on the species, healthy subterranean termite colonies will "swarm" or send out winged reproductive termites to start new colonies in the spring. The swarmers are darker in color, some species are almost black, and have four, similarly-sized wings. For more information on how to tell termites from ants, see the diagram below. ■



# Oriental Cockroaches

The “water bug” or Oriental cockroach is more closely associated with cooler, damp areas than most other common cockroaches. These insects mostly feed upon decaying organic matter. They are found in damp basements, cellars, crawl spaces, near drains, leaky pipes and beneath refrigerators, sinks and washing machines, under floors, and inside walls. They usually are seen walking around first floor of buildings. Outdoors, they can be found beneath decomposing leaves or within mulch beds. At different times of the year (usually spring or fall), there can be a mass migration of Oriental cockroaches into buildings, but because of their preference for cooler temperatures, they can also commonly be found outdoors and in unheated buildings during the winter.

Adult Oriental cockroaches are very large, shiny and black. Females are about 1-1/4-inch long, broad and have little non-functional pads for wings. Males are about one inch long, more slender and have non-functional short wings running the length of the abdomen. Juvenile cockroaches (*the nymphs*) are darker in color than adults, similarly shaped and wingless. Egg cases are dark reddish-brown, one inch long (largest of the common cockroaches), and look like a ladies’ small handbag.

These cockroaches are most common during late spring and early summer. They are more sluggish than other common cockroaches, develop in damp basements and sewers, and forage mostly at or below ground level in structures. They are usually not found in cupboards, on walls or on upper levels of buildings. They occur outside during warm weather, and, during cool periods, may migrate in mass indoors. They have a preference for high-moisture conditions. They can live without

food for a month if water is present, but die in two weeks without water.

Oriental cockroaches can move into a building, entering through cracks in foundations, around loose-fitting doors or windows, and along water and gas pipes. Homeowners can help themselves by repairing leaky water faucets and pipes, sealing openings such as cracks in foundation walls, exterior walls around air conditioners, doors, windows, floors, ceilings, around plumbing fixtures, electrical outlets, baseboards, etc. with putty, plastic, wood or other caulking material.

Sanitation is also of paramount importance in cockroach control. Clean areas beneath cabinets, sinks, stoves, refrigerators, etc. as well as cupboards, pantry shelves and food storage bins. Make sure to clean up spilled food and liquids.

If a severe cockroach infestation develops or if you are in doubt as to the approach to take, contact us, your reputable, licensed pest control firm; we have the material, training and experience to do a thorough job. ■





Although voles do spend considerable time above ground and may occasionally be seen scurrying about, most of their time is spent below ground in their burrow systems.



## There's a Vole In That Hole!

**V**oles (*Microtus spp.*) are small rodents and are collectively called meadow mice. Voles do not commonly invade homes, and should not be confused with the house mouse. They have a compact, heavy body, short legs, short-furred tail, small eyes, and partially hidden ears. The long, coarse fur is blackish brown to grayish brown. When fully grown they can measure 5-8 inches in length, which includes the tail.

Voles are mostly herbivorous and cause damage by feeding on a wide range of garden plants including a variety of grasses, herbaceous plants, bulbs, tubers, vegetables, turf grasses, and other landscape plantings. Voles store seeds and other plant matter in underground chambers. Voles will gnaw the bark off fruit trees including almond, apple, cherry, and citrus. Gnaw marks, droppings, runways, and burrows all indicate vole damage. If voles gnaw completely around the trunk or roots, the tree can be girdled. Girdling damage on trunks and roots kills trees, as it disrupts the tree's nutrient flow.

Voles are active during both day and night, year-round. They are normally found in areas with dense vegetation. Voles dig many short, shallow burrows and make underground nests of grass, stems, and leaves. In areas with winter snow, voles will burrow in and through the snow to the surface.

Although voles do spend considerable time above ground and may occasionally be seen scurrying about, most of their time is spent below ground in their burrow systems. The clearest signs of their presence are the well-traveled, above ground runways that connect burrow openings; the runways are usually hidden beneath a protective layer of grass or other ground cover. The runways are easily found by pulling back overhanging ground cover. Fresh clippings of green grass and greenish-colored droppings about 3/16 inch long in the runways and near the burrows are further evidence of voles. If you suspect vole damage to your yard, call us for advice on how best to manage this pest. ■

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