

NON-TOXIC & LOW-TOXIC TERMITE CONTROL

What are termites?

Termites are insects that make their nests in the ground and can be a significant problem to homeowners. Most untreated homes are at risk to termite damage, especially if the house has been built with a timber frame.

Termites are extremely small in size. They build a central nest with long tunnels – sometimes up to 100 meters in length – to find their food source, timber. Within the colony are the queen, king, workers, soldiers and swarmers who all play an important role in its survival. Swarmers have wings and can fly to start other colonies, as well as reproduce.

Termites thrive in damp and dark conditions, so you may be unaware of their presence until they have damaged your house. Termites can pass through small gaps to excavate timber, leaving a thin outside layer to maintain humidity inside. Termites will build mud tunnels to work around obstacles, another sign they are present.

Protecting your home

It is advisable to protect your home against infestation by following these precautions:

- All exposed woods should be sealed.
- Sub-floor ventilation minimizes damp and discourages termites.
- Leaking taps, pipes and gutters should be repaired promptly.
- Good drainage design will help avoid moisture build up.
- Choose landscaping materials carefully and consider landscaping away from your house.
- Use termite resistant timbers if you are building or renovating, eg. White cypress pine, treated pine and cedar.

And remember – the only certain protection is to build with materials other than wood.

Junee Shire Council encourages the use of Australian grown plantation and recycled timbers. A full list of termite resistant timbers is available under Australian Standard 3660.1. Australian Standards can be purchased online at www.standards.com.au

Termite treatments

Non-toxic termite protection should be used whenever possible. If termite infestation does occur, homeowners should choose the least toxic method of eradication.

Since June 1995 organochloride chemicals have been banned for termite control due to their detrimental impact on the environment. There are alternative solutions to pest control and chemical treatments should only be considered as a last resort.

Non-toxic termite solutions

- Have annual pest inspections by a qualified, licensed pest inspector including a written report. Ensure that any treatments carried out are approved by Standards Australia 3660.2
- Arrange a pest inspection if buying a new house.
- Alter your house structure to make it less inviting to termites.
- Remove timber and wood chips in contact with soil from next to your home.
- Remove the entire termite nest by a qualified technician if it can be located.
- Install physical barriers eg. termite shield caps, stainless steel mesh, granite gravel, brush-on rubber bitumen. These work best when your home is regularly inspected.

Low-toxic termite solutions

- Chemical barriers (most frequently used on or around concrete slabs).
- Chemical baiting.
- Chemical injected into termite tunnels.
- Chemical hand spraying.

If you do discover termites or termite damage in your home it is important not to disturb the area. Call a licensed pest inspector immediately to assess the situation and give advice.

No single solution is suited to all construction types and specifications and no method of treatment can be considered to be 100% effective. For advice on the choice of treatment, consult a qualified pest inspector.

How to choose a pest inspector

- Approach at least two or three businesses and compare their quotes.
- Keep notes of all conversations that you have with businesses when seeking quotes.
- Check how long the business has been operational and their customer references.
- Ensure the company advocates the use of environmentally friendly methods of treating termites.
- If you see evidence of termites, pest inspectors should be willing to visit the site and give a free or inexpensive quote for the job.
- Reputable pest inspectors will require a fee for a full inspection of your home that could take two to three hours.
- All reports after a full inspection should be written and include a clear diagram outlining the problem areas.

A skilful pest inspector should be able to

- Correctly identify the termite species.
- Thoroughly inspect your home utilizing specialist equipment.
- Analyse your home for preventative measures.
- Design and implement an effective program to eradicate termites and/or protect your home.

Do not attempt do-it-yourself termite control... leave it to the professionals.

Important!

Termite damage is usually not covered in house insurance policies. Check with your insurance company on the terms of any policy regarding termite damage.

Useful reference

"Termites and Borers – A Homeowners Guide to Detection and Control" by P. Hadlington and C. Marsden, available online from www.publish.csiro.au