Termite Damage
Recognizing the Signs of Infestation

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Termite biology may not be an interesting subject to most, but if you’re a homeowner in Florida, you may at least want a quick overview of the way these destructive pests operate. This is because unless you have proper termite protection, these insidious little insects could cause serious damage to your home, and with termite swarming season upon us, it’s important to recognize any telltale signs of infestation.

The most destructive type of termite in Florida is the subterranean termite. In nature, these are highly beneficial, as they aid in the decomposition of felled trees and return nutrients back to the soil; but in developed areas, the indiscriminate appetite of these zealous recyclers leads them to any wood available—including any found inside our homes.

A typical termite colony is made up of several thousand to over a million workers, all of which form a silently sprawling network of foragers underground.

These scouts are especially attracted to moisture-prone areas which can lead to foundation cracks, pipe chases, construction gaps, and other miniscule entry points around the home. Occasionally, termites must climb over a small amount of concrete—usually the slab, or foundation of the home. In order to avoid being exposed to other insects, or the dry outside air, passageways called “mud-tubes” are constructed (see picture below).

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Termite Swarms (Continued from page 1)

Once inside, termites continue to feed, 24 hours a day, until their food source has been exhausted. Also, due to the cryptic nature of the colony, by the time any evidence is observed, the damage incurred is usually extensive. So what type of evidence might you expect to see? In addition to an occasional mud-tube (which may be hard to recognize if you’re not looking), a mature colony will deploy thousands of swarmers.

With wings and black bodies, these swarmers look very different from the rest of the colony and are often mistaken for flying ants when they pour out in search of a cozy place to start a new colony. This can be dangerous since by the time a colony sends swarmers, it is already producing thousands of destructive workers, and if the swarmers are thought only to be ant swarmers, a very serious problem will continue unresolved. If you should suspect activity, use the ID guide included in this newsletter to help make that determination, or, of course, call our office. One of our experts will be glad to dispatch a field rep for a definitive identification.

Protect Your Investment

If you haven’t already, we strongly recommend securing termite protection. Naturally, we’d love the opportunity to protect your home, but even if you don’t choose Deans, please be sure your home is protected. And if you’re currently with another company and wish to change, you’ll be pleased to know that converting your coverage is quick and easy. In fact, by doing so, you’ll also be eligible for our Multi-Service discount. So call today, for great service at a great price, and don’t leave anything to chance!
Before we begin with how to eradicate these insects, it’s only fair to begin by mentioning that these insects aren’t aggressive and are in fact quite beneficial. Many species contribute to pollination and one species even feeds exclusively on the venomous black widow spider. Still though, their habit of constructing nests made of mud on our homes, boats, tools, and anywhere else they deem suitable, has managed to procure them a spot on everyone’s pest list.

From pipe organ-like chambers to perfectly formed pot-like vessels (which are technically made by potter wasps, but we’ll include those too), these crafty little creatures are actually leaving behind a cozy spot for their offspring to grow and hatch. They do this by dropping several eggs, then filling the chambers with select species of spider, which are used as a food source for the hatching offspring. In a way, they’re sort of cute—like little nurseries. That is, if you think nurseries filled with paralyzed spiders are cute. Ok, maybe “cute” isn’t the appropriate adjective. So how do we get rid of these creepy nests?

Removing a nest that’s already been built is pretty straightforward. Simply scrape it with a small putty knife and, if the material on which it was built allows, use a scouring brush to remove any remaining residue. I once had a call from someone who had a problem with a particularly resourceful little mud dauber that had built her nest using wet concrete from a nearby construction site, thus leaving freshly formed rocks on the side of the home. In that case, the stone nests had to be chiseled down, and the remaining concrete residue had to be painted to blend with the home’s stucco texture.

Of course, preventing these sneaky sculptors from building is the real key, which is why a weather-resistant residual insecticide is needed. Our Home Pest program entails the application of such a product, which reduces both wasp activity and the spiders which often attract them. Because legal and environmental obligations prevent our technicians from applying product to every square inch of a home, the occasional wasp may sneak by, but your technician will be sure to address that and reapply any product as needed.
Here at Deans, we’re always looking for ways to strengthen the relationship we share with our customers. That’s why we’re excited to announce that we’ve joined the online social community of Facebook!

Those familiar with the site know that in addition to providing a great way to interact with friends and family, Facebook also allows customers to learn more about the companies with whom they do business, and take advantage of exclusive discounts and contests. We’ll share relevant videos and articles, offer online pest identification, and provide tips including real-time freeze and drought alerts to help minimize seasonal turf damage!

We invite you to join in by ‘Liking’ us and commenting on our Facebook Page (tell us which pest you find creepiest); and to show our appreciation, we’ll automatically enter you into a drawing for a chance to win $100.00 off your next pest control application! Unsure about how to Like or comment? It’s easy:

1. **find us**
   in the Facebook search field

2. **like us**
   by clicking on the Like button

3. **tell us**
   which critter “bugs” you the most!

On May 7th, we’ll select an active customer at random (to keep our lines free for other customers, we kindly ask that no inquiries be made by phone). Just remember, we won’t know if you clicked Like unless you comment as well, so to ensure that you’re in the drawing, make sure to leave a comment! For those that have entered our January/February drawing, you can get in on the action too...just share one of our posts and we’ll re-enter you into the March/April drawing as well! But be sure to hurry; your chance to enter ends May 5th!

Current customers only. One entry per customer. $100 credit will be applied toward customer account, regardless of single service price. Discounts and credits non-refundable nor to be exchanged for cash. Prizes left unclaimed beyond 48 hours will be awarded to next eligible participant. Drawing closes May 5th at 12:01am.