

OTHER TERMITE ISSUES

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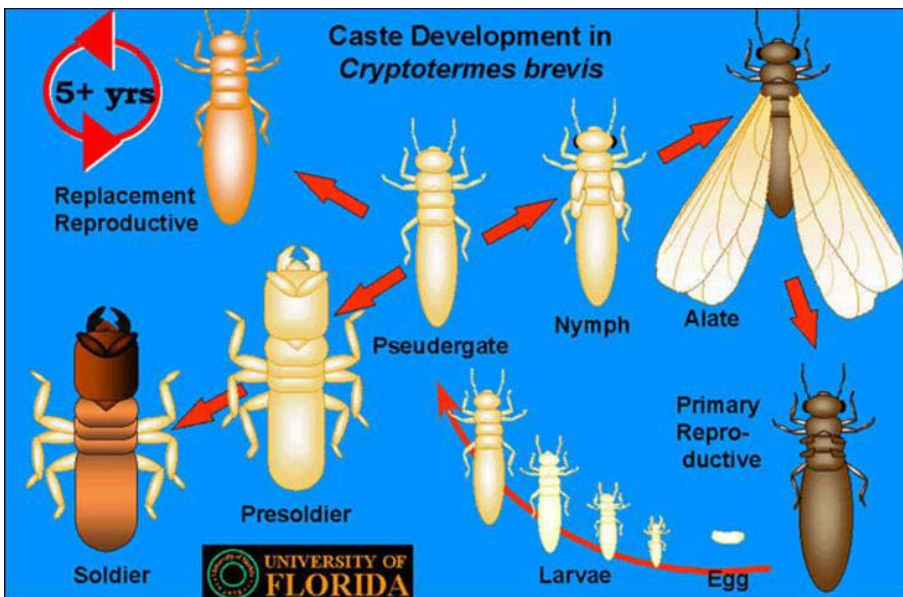
In a past article I highlighted some of the challenges associated with subterranean termites. This week I would like to shine the spotlight on another type of termite - the drywood termite. This type of termite has a very different mode of operation and nests above ground in the actual wood it attacks. The control of this termite is significantly different than subterranean termites. While there are several species of drywood termites, this article will give a general description of the behavior and control options for drywood termites.

Drywood termites infest dry, sound wood and are most often found in old homes; although houses that are only 5-10 years old can host infestations. Places to monitor may include wood flooring, frames, window sills, doors, in attics and even in furniture. Signs left by these insects are very diagnostic. The telltale sign of fecal pellets or frass indicates an infestation.



Pellets of the West Indian drywood termite.

The drywood termites push these tiny, six-sided pellets out of what are known as “kick-out holes”. Besides a cone-shaped pile of brown to black pellets below the kick-out holes, the infested wood may appear blistered and papery.



Life cycle of the West Indian drywood termite.

Somewhat similar in overall appearance to the subterranean termite, drywood termites are a larger, more cylinder-like in shape and have shorter legs. The soldier cast of these termites features a strange plug-like head that is actually used defensively to block holes and pathways when protecting the colony from invasions of ants.

So a colony of drywood termites has been detected and some type of action must be taken - what are the options? Depending on the infestation, fumigation or tenting

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may be needed. Treatments using temperature extremes are also an option. For instance, heat can be used to eliminate drywood termites from a portion of a house. Sometimes cold temperatures are used in wall voids as a treatment. Spot treatments using insecticide wood injections can be applied through small drill holes. Other high tech options include microwave energy which kills the termites inside the wood with heat and an electrocution method that involves a tool that kills the termites in certain targeted areas. In some cases, the simple act of wood replacement removes the infestation if it is in a small isolated area.

As drywood termite infestations are inside the wood, it is hard to determine if the colony has been killed. Monitor to make sure that new swarms do not emerge, no new fecal pellets are appearing (although there can be a trickle of pellets after a colony is killed if the wood item is bumped) or new colonies don't move in. As with subterranean termites, have at least three companies make inspections and if you need to go with one also ask for references, insurance information, and appropriate certifications and licenses. Also make sure that they sit down with you to go over the treatment options and guarantees, supply you with the pesticide labels and if present, show you proof of evidence of active infestations.

For more information about our Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, please contact our FYN Horticulture Program Assistant, Allison Turner, at 764.4351 or email Allison.Turner@CharlotteFL.com. Allison can help educate you about the FYN Program so you can create a beautiful, Florida-Friendly landscape that saves you time and money while conserving precious water resources and reducing pollution.

**contact a
MASTER GARDENER**
on the Plant Lifeline from 1:00pm-4:00pm Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 764.4340 or by email Master.Gardener@charlottefl.com.

You can also visit them at one of our many **Plant Clinics** around the county:
<http://charlotte.ifas.ufl.edu/PlantClinics.pdf>

Resources:

- Scheffrahn, R.H. & Su, Nan-Yau (2008) West Indian Drywood Termite, *Cryptotermes brevis* (Walker). UF/IFAS Extension Service.
- Oi, F.M., Scheffrahn, R., Kern, W. & Ruppert, K.C. (2008) Drywood and Dampwood Termites. UF/IFAS Extension Service.
- Brammer, A.S. & Scheffrahn, R.H. (2008) Drywood Termite, *Cryptotermes cavifrons* Banks. UF/IFAS Extension Service.

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