

TERMITE FACTS

What are Termites?

The termites found in Ontario are called “eastern subterranean termites”. They occur in large colonies that live underground and feed on available wood. They prefer damp conditions. They build “shelter tubes” to travel above ground to forage up trees or into homes. The shelter tube maintains the damp and dark conditions they require. They are always digging exploratory tunnels and searching for new food sources. They must first forage into your yard before they can find a way to enter your house, so it is very important to eliminate termite habitat in your yard.

Recognizing live termites

Termites are small insects, approximately the size of a grain of rice. Workers are creamy white in colour, whereas Soldiers have an orange head and long mandibles. Unlike maggots, termites have six legs and look like white ants however without a constricted “waist”.



Are you providing a haven for termites?

Stumps, dead trees, wood retaining walls, landscape ties and wood chip mulch, provide sheltered conditions which are ideal for termites feeding and nesting. These type of yard wood are the greatest liabilities to residents and should be removed.

Subterranean termites tend to favour softwoods (pine or spruce) and faster growing hardwoods (aspen). However they feed on virtually every type of wood. Termites only feed on dead wood and will not attack the sapwood of live trees. Building materials such as rigid polystyrene insulation boards, plaster, soft plastics and underground cables, may also be penetrated by foraging termites even though they do not feed on these materials.

Termites can enter a structure by tunneling through wood, by building shelter tubes, or by entering cracks in foundations.

Recognizing termite damage

Evidence of new activity is considered to be either the visual sighting of live termites or the presence of new shelter tubes.

TERMITE TIPS

What can you do to fight termites?

During the months of April through November, you can conduct inspections both around the yard and inside your house.

- Lift any moveable wood in contact with soil such as firewood, lumber, or barrels and examine the wood/soil interface for termites or their tunnels.
- Examine stumps by prying off the bark or chopping into them.
- Carefully examine crevices in the bark of large trees for shelter tubes.
- Also examine compost bins, garages, sheds, crawl spaces, under porches and decks, and exposed foundation walls.

Check the house starting in the basement using a flashlight and flat-edge screwdriver. If shelter tubes are found they should be carefully examined along their length. If the ends of shelter tubes are still wet this indicates they were recently built, and probably still active. If the shelter tubes show no cracks or damage, this also indicates that they may still be active.

Cleaning up your property

You can manage your yard wood to minimize the risk of letting termites get established on your property.

- Elevate a shed or dog house on a concrete pad.
- Stack firewood and lumber off the ground on a metal rack, concrete pad, or patio stones in the sun away from the house.
- Remove pressure-treated edging boards, retaining walls, or railway ties and dispose.
- Live trees are usually not infested, but dead trees or a heavily infested live tree should be cut down, the stump excavated or chipped, and the chippings disposed.
- Treat fence posts with borate rods.
- Wood chip mulches provide excellent food source for termites and should not be used.

To prevent the further spread of termites, please transport any material and soil suspect of termites from a property within the ‘red zone’ to the Waterloo Region Landfill and identify as possible termite material to Regional Staff.