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### Look Out for Lurking Devastation - by Bob Davis

Every spring season new buyers hit the market looking for the perfect place to call home. Most seek the home with the beautiful front entrance, square footage for the entire family, and the intricate architectural details that set it apart from the rest. For those already nesting in their dream houses, ongoing maintenance is required to ensure beauty and structural durability. Yet often overlooked by both of these groups is the potential for damaging pests that lurk behind their walls or beneath their soil.

Americans spend \$5 billion every year repairing the damage caused by destructive termites. Ants are no picnic either, invading both interior and exterior living spaces. At the Termite Institute and the Ant Institute, home owners can learn about prevention, control and solutions for these common pests. Since launching, these interactive websites have educated tens of thousands of home owners about the prevalence of infestation across the country, where to find a pest professional and advice for buyers and sellers in the course of a real estate transaction.

#### The Threat in Arizona

We all know that bugs aren't as glamorous as the new trends in kitchen design or landscaping, but Arizona residents should place high priority on controlling and preventing pests such as termites and ants. Arizona is considered a moderate to very high risk of termite infestation.

There are four species of termites that lurk in the state; the Arid Land Subterranean, Desert Subterranean, Drywood termite and Formosan Subterranean are all species of termites that threaten homes here. Our dry air draws termites into homes where they acquire moisture from wood structures. These hungry critters swarm during the months of May through August and knowledge of their destructive behavior is the first step toward prevention.

As for ants, there are six different species that can infest homes in the state. A few of the most common and most threatening include the Carpenter Ant-which can structurally damage a new home, the Red Fire Ant- notorious for stinging people and pets and the Odorous House Ant-when crushed they smell something like rotten coconuts!

New home owners may search the shelves at local home improvement stores at the first sight of ants, but experts advise that a professional treatment is the best approach to achieving long-term control of these pesky critters. Products available at home and garden centers can be a quick fix, but the eyes and skills of a trained pest management professional can solve the problem correctly the first time with targeted treatments.

#### A Preventative Approach

Because termites and ants can strike without warning, even the most beautiful, well kept homes and newly built construction are at risk for invasion. Some termite pre-treatments applied by builders during the construction of a new home provide only short-term protection that will leave the same home vulnerable to termite damage. Real estate and pest professionals advise home buyers to inquire about the termite treatments used in the construction of a property and request the best protection for the life of the home.

Regular inspections and preventative termite treatments are critical in Arizona's warm weather where termites and ants thrive year round. Buyers and sellers should recognize that a preventative termite treatment can prevent an inspector finding a raging infestation behind the wall just before settlement- a consequence that could potentially kill the deal. Additionally, termite damage is not typically covered by home owner's insurance.

#### Peace of Mind

A thorough termite inspection conducted by a trained professional is a must before purchasing a new home, and quarterly pest management inspections and treatments will ensure that other bugs such as ants, scorpions and spiders don't take up residence on your property. Thriving pest infestations can be found in the farthest reaches of the home-behind shower walls, spaces above the ceiling or dead trees in the yard. Without prevention, new home owners can be stuck with mounting bills from termite damage repairs and treatments-not exactly the world's best housewarming gift.

#### Learn from the Professionals

Learning about professional termite and ant treatment options will save home owners time and money in the long run. There are many products available and effectiveness varies widely. Many experts recommend treating a home with one of the newest types of treatment available-an undetectable liquid. With this treatment, termites, ants and other common Arizona pests unknowingly crawl through treated soil and distribute the liquid's active ingredient throughout their colonies.

Above all, leave pest control to the professionals, especially when it comes to potential structural damage to your new home. A thorough inspection by a pest control professional and discussion of the available options for control results in a more successful, longer lasting and more cost effective approach than the trial and error strategies often attempted by home owners. Remember, your home should be a sanctuary for you and your family, not a feeding frenzy for pests!

Bob Davis, Ph.D., is Chief Entomologist for the Ant and Termite Institute created by BASF-The Chemical Company, manufacturer of Termidor and Phantom termiticide-insecticides.

www.TermiteInstitute.com  
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