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## Now

### is the time to check for termites



Termites crawl in a trap.

[TULSA WORLD FILE](#)

By [KIM BROWN](#) World Scene Writer  
5/3/2008

They may be tiny insects, but termites can be just plain terrifying.

And now is the time when they are swarming around the Tulsa area. The first reaction to termite colonies is often panic — after all, they are responsible for about \$5 billion in damages each year in the country, according to the Termite Institute, an educational panel made up of national industry experts.

"A swarm can be a traumatic thing and can lead to some panic," said Bob Davis, a Termite Institute entomologist and marketing specialist for BASF — The Chemical Co. "Termites do damage to wood but they don't damage it extremely fast. You do want to take care of the problem, though, because you don't want the damage to get worse."

Eastern subterranean termites are common in this part of the country and thrive in the climate, and the "swarmers" come out in the spring, said Dan Kidd, owner of Tulsa's Truly Nolen of Oklahoma.

"They are very visible," said Kidd, who has been in the pest control business for about 40 years. "They have wings and sometimes they shed and leave them on the ground. Swarmers are flying from an existing nest to a different one to create a new colony. They live in the ground in a nest or a colony, and they come up through the foundation or cracks and crevices and openings in your house."

Along with the swarmers, a termite colony also includes workers, soldiers, kings and queens. Some queens can live for 30 years, said Roger Graham, general manager of Arrow Exterminators.

"They're pretty amazing insects, really. They're social insects and what's interesting is that they all work on pheromone trails, similar to ants. When a termite finds a food source, like your house, it sets a pheromone trail to get others to come to the colony, and when they are discovered it sets off an alarm pheromone to warn others away. They're actually pretty sophisticated," Graham said.

Witnessing a flying swarm is the first tip-off that termites could be a problem in your house, but what you don't see is a bigger concern. Many termites hide and feast on wood in the walls, and no building is termite-proof.

"Every type of construction in the Tulsa area — whether it's a house with a crawl space, a basement or concrete slab — all are susceptible to termites," Kidd said.

That's why all of the experts agreed that a pest control professional is the best person to call if you fear you have termites.

If termites are found, there are a couple of options to treat the infestation: an in-ground baiting system that lures termites in; or undetectable liquid treatments that spread termiticide from insect to insect.

Another option is to do a preventative treatment or have a professional conduct regular inspections.

"It's important to have a professional give an inspection once a year. They can catch things early," Davis said. "Or if you're building a house you'll want to talk to somebody with a pre-construction treatment that will help protect the structure."

Although subterranean termites are pests and can cause tremendous damage, they're not going to do excessive damage right away.

"It's not like in the cartoons where they're going to eat your house down overnight," Kidd said. "They're definitely a real threat to your home but they're not going to devastate your house that fast."

**Keep the termites away**

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There are some common-sense things homeowners can do to prevent termite infestation, experts said. For more information about termites, go to [www.tulsaworld.com/termiteinstitute](http://www.tulsaworld.com/termiteinstitute).

1. Never keep firewood close to your house, and rid your yard of all loose debris, tree stumps or lumber, particularly leftovers from the December ice storm.
2. Look for water leaks, standing water, leaky pipes, gutters or downspouts, and make sure water is draining away from your house. Termites need moisture to survive.
3. Seal all cracks or holes in the foundation, so termites can't get in your house.
4. Trim all shrubs, bushes and other dense greenery away from the foundation of your home. Move mulch away from the foundation as well.

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