

## Termites in Hawaii

by

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### Don't be a victim of termites

Termites cause more damage in Hawaii every year than fires, storms, flooding and all other natural disasters combined. A mature colony of Formosan (ground) termites may have over 10 million termites, weigh as much as a mature "pit bull", and eat as much as 4lbs of wood per day! We have recorded the rate of Formosan termites tubing (building mud tubes to access new food sources) at a residence in Haleiwa at 8ft per 24 hours, or, 4 inches per hour! According to our statistics which are based upon hundreds of homes and buildings throughout Oahu that utilize our Sentricon Baiting System, the average structure is attacked by ground termites about once every 26 months. Left unchecked, a structure may have multiple colonies of termites infesting it and consuming wood at an alarming rate. Drywood termites cause less damage on a per colony comparison, as a result of their small colony size, numbering in the thousands, they usually have multiple colonies in a single structure and their cumulative damage may result in serious structural damage.

### How termites survive

Termites feed on cellulose, a complex chemical in plant cell walls, and they are very important in the natural decomposition of fallen trees, leaves and other plant life in nature. Ground termites build their nests in the soil or in the sides of trees, poles and other subterranean sources of cellulose. Occasionally, when conditions permit and a moisture source is available they will infest from above and build aerial nests. This is a peculiarity of our Formosan termites that few other ground termites can adapt to. Ground termites rely mainly on the soil for their source of moisture. Drywood termites do not need as much moisture, and favor dry wood such as rafters in attics. All termites are made up of several castes, each with distinct functions and behaviors. In the case of Formosan termites, this includes the reproductives (queen, king, and winged swarmers), soldiers who defend the colony and workers who feed the colony. Property owners seldom see the worker or soldier termites, but, often see the clouds of swarming winged reproductives that are attracted to lights on warm, humid still evenings. These swarmers are often confused with winged ants, whose true identity is not revealed until damage caused by their infestation is discovered.

## How termites find their way into your building

Drywood termite swarmers are attracted by light around buildings; once they alight upon the building they break off their wings, find a partner and a suitable piece of wood and start their colony. Frequently, they are brought into a building by introducing an infested piece of furniture. Once they swarm the infestation spreads. Ground termites typically build their nests in the ground, foragers make underground tunnels or above ground shelter tubes to seek out new food sources and connect them to their food. Although they also swarm, they often enter buildings through cracks as small as 1/32 of an inch. Frequently entering through cracks and expansion joints in slabs, foam insulation, hollow block walls and spaces around plumbing pipes.

### Look for signs of infestation

Pencil sized mud tubes running across bare concrete, or, masonry between the soil and any wooden part of your building. Thin, small, papery wings about ½ an inch long on your window sills, or floors. Thin “bubbled” or distorted areas of paint on wooden surfaces, especially if they are cool to the touch and have a damp musty odor. Any wooden building parts (especially if they are important support structures) beginning to “sag” unexpectedly.

### How to select a termite treatment firm

So you have got termites, now what! Do not panic! I have yet to encounter a termite problem that cannot be solved. Although significant structural damage seldom occurs in a short period of time, do not delay your decision to call in a professional. Selecting the right company may be your greatest challenge; there are over 76 pest control companies on Oahu alone, all who claim to be experts. In a survey recently conducted on Oahu, prices ranged from: priced to make a 15% margin, to priced 10% below the cost of materials alone! If something sounds too good to be true, chances are it is! Do the research, call RICO to check the companies’ complaint history, call DCCA and check to see if they are licensed and insured. Ask friends and neighbors, and ask yourself if you feel confident that you want to enter into a long term relationship with the company, since your warranty should last at least 5 years.

### Call the Blue Crew to Help You!

Sandwich Isle Termite and Pest Control, Inc. is a privately owned Hawaii corporation. We are licensed and insured in all categories of termite and pest control. Our service offering includes, bird and general pest control, termite baiting, ground treatment, tent fumigation and termite inspection reports. We have 42 highly trained staff members that are committed to providing you with the best possible service. Call the blue crew to help you; you will be glad that you did.

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