

Alternative Controls for Termites

There are a number of groups of species of termites, which attack structures in California. The most common are drywood termites and subterranean termites. This document intends to aid the consumer in their decision making process. This document neither endorses any products, nor does it discourage the use of any products.

Drywood Termites:

Biology: Drywood termites live inside wood without having any need to have contact with the soil. Termites typically initially enter a structure when alates (the reproductive members of a colony) fly onto or into a structure and start a colony. It will take several years before a new colony is developed enough to begin sending out their own reproductive members to start new colonies. This is called "swarming". When drywood termite colonies inside a structure swarm; many of the reproductives will be swarming inside of wall voids, attic voids, subareas and living areas. The lack of natural predators inside these structural voids and the presence of plenty of nesting sites result in the establishment of new colonies. By the time consumers or even professionals detect a colony or even several colonies, it is quite common for the structure to have multiple colonies in varying stages of development hidden inside the walls.

Control Strategies: All methods and strategies fall into two categories. Whole house treatments and local treatments. As a consumer you need to decide which strategy you want to use. Whole house treatments are by far the most efficacious. The difference is so dramatic that there are several laws, which require that this difference be made clear to consumers. The first are subsection (f) 4 and 5 of §1999.5 of the Structural Pest Control Act which say that it is illegal to claim that a pest control service is an alternative or substitute another pest control service, if what is being compared provides different treatment coverage of a structure, and it further says that any local treatments for wood destroying pests can treat an entire structure for target pests. The second is that any time a company recommends a local treatment for wood destroying pests, they must provide the consumer with the following disclosure "Local treatment is not intended to be an entire structure treatment method. If infestations of wood-destroying pests extend or exist beyond the area(s) of local treatment, they may not be exterminated." §1991(a)(8) of the Structural Pest Control Act.

Whole structure treatments options would be fumigation or whole house heat treatments. Most companies using the heat technology use it for local treatments, as there are a number of challenges trying to use it for whole house treatments.

Local treatments would include a broad range of options from physically removing the infested wood, a variety of strategies using various registered pesticides, and a number of pesticidal technologies. The Pest Control Operators of California is waiting for the State of California to complete their efficacy and safety testing of these technologies before we start tracking who uses such technologies. Due to a variety of problems related to efficacy, and false advertising*, the State of California mandated that all alternative devices for the control of wood destroying pests be registered with the State to be tested for safety and efficacy. (The final results will also give guidelines as to what advertising claims may be made about these products/strategies as well.) The only technologies, which may currently be used, are those, which met the initial deadline for submitting their devices for evaluation. The State has not completed their testing.

**These devices and products and strategies generally can't be marketed or sold as being a replacement or equivalent of fumigation because they do not have the efficacy nor the scope of treatment of a fumigation. It is also generally illegal to claim that one product is "safer" or "less toxic" than another strategy. <http://www.pestboard.ca.gov/article6.htm> University of California testing concluded that Vikane Fumigation was the most efficacious method, followed by whole house heat treatment, and the rest of the technologies and strategies falling far behind the first two strategies.*

Fumigation is performed using Vikane. Vikane is a non-residual product, meaning that unless someone is planning on entering a property prematurely there is no exposure to the fumigant.

With this information disclosed, in an informal survey of our membership, more than 2/3 of our members have some form of "alternative" strategies to fumigation for drywood termite control available for their customers. (A minority of these companies will recommend these products up front, but will rather make them available as a secondary recommendation if that is the desire of the consumer.)

Efficacy: Fumigation is most efficacious, full structure heat treatments second most efficacious, and the rest are local treatments with limited efficacy. Most of the local strategies will have a niche where they are somewhat effective on a local level, and areas/situations where they are definitely not very effective. Local treatment strategies are local and limited in scope, and then within the limited scope, their efficacy is limited as well. While local treatments are very limited in their efficacy, approximately 70% of treatments for drywood termites are using local treatments using registered pesticides. You should have your home inspected on a regular basis to continue to track your termite problems.

You may find reputable companies here:
<http://www.pcoc.org/hire/index.cfm>

For efficacy structural fumigation is the best method for solving your problem. Assuming the consumer does not attempt to break into their home during the fumigation there is no consumer exposure to any materials used by the fumigators.

The second most efficacious drywood treatment is heat treatments

All other treatments are by law limited and the consumer must be told so in writing. That said better than 70% of the time consumers chose to go with a limited treatment.

All of these local limited treatments will have limited efficacy. I suggest you read <http://www.pcoc.org/consumer/pcocvillatermiti.pdf> to learn what the University of California has to say about several "alternative" strategies.

Subterranean termites:

Biology: Subterranean Termites live in large communal colonies, which are based in the soil. These termite colonies are typically much larger than drywood termites and overall are responsible for far more damage in the United States than drywood termites. These termites forage for cellulose in or on the soil. Structures are ideal food sources for subterranean termites. They build mud tubes up into structures potentially giving them access to the entire structure. Like drywood termites consumers may have multiple colonies on their property or in their structure.

Control Strategies:

Currently there are several strategies for subterranean termite control:

- 1: Chemical barriers (The primary strategy for the past 30+ years)
- 2: Physical barriers (cement, sand, mesh etc.)
- 3: Baits (Sentricon and many others)
- 4: Chemical toxins (Termidor, Premise)

Some strategies are pre-construction, others are post construction.

Soil Barrier treatments for entire structure, or use of new technology products for the entire structure. (Foundation perimeter) are generally considered very efficacious at keeping termites out of structures. Local treatments are less efficacious. Baits are great for monitoring termite populations and suppression/destruction of colonies over a long-term basis. Baits are wonderful for long term monitoring of subterranean termite colonies in your yard and can have a positive effect of suppressing colonies in your property.

Locally treating the soil will have limited efficacy and by law the company must provide you with the following disclosure "Local treatment is not intended to be an entire structure treatment method. If infestations of wood-destroying pests extend or exist beyond the area(s) of local treatment, they may not be exterminated."

Addendum:

TITLE 16. Professional And Vocational Regulations
Division 19. Structural Pest Control Board

Article 6. Enforcement

§ 1999.5. False and Misleading Advertising

(a) It is unlawful for any licensee, or any employee thereof, directly or indirectly to make, disseminate, represent, claim, state, or advertise, or cause to be made, disseminated, represented, claimed, stated or advertised by any manner or means whatever, any statement or representation concerning structural pest control, as defined in Business and Professions Code section 8505, which is unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading, and which is known, or which by the exercise of reasonable care should be known, to be unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading.

(b) As used in this section, the terms "make," "disseminate," "represent," "claim," "state," or "advertise" and any of their variants include, but are not limited to any print communications (for example, telephone directories, newspapers, magazines or other publications or books, notices, circulars, pamphlets, letters, handbills, posters, bills, signs, placards, cards, labels, tags, vehicle or equipment signage, window displays, vehicular advertising or store signs), electronic communication (for example, radio, television, audio or video tape, telephone, or the Internet), demonstration, direct person-to-person contact, or other means or methods now or hereafter employed to bring structural pest control services, methods, products, pesticides, or devices to the attention of the public.

(c) As used in this section "the exercise of reasonable care" includes a duty to investigate the basis of any statement or representation to assure that the statement or representation is not unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading. The making of a

statement or representation without knowledge of its truthfulness breaches the duty to investigate.

(d) Violation of this section occurs at the time an unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading statement or representation is made. Once a violation occurs, subsequent disclosures, caveats, disclaimers, or waivers cannot eliminate it.

(e) The remedies or penalties provided by this section are cumulative to each other and to the remedies or penalties available under all other laws and regulations of this State.

(f) Examples of direct or indirect statements or representations which are unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading include, but are not limited to, the following:

(1) any advertising in violation of Business and Professions Code sections 17200, and 17500;

(2) any statement or representation that misrepresents a fact or fails to disclose an important or necessary fact about a pest control service, method, product, pesticide or device;

(3) any unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading statement or representation about the effects of a pest control service, method, product, pesticide or device;

(4) any expressed or implied statement or representation that one or a combination of pest control services, methods, products, pesticides, or devices is an alternative or substitute for, is comparable to, or is better than any other pest control service, method, product, pesticide, device, or combination thereof, if what is being compared provides different treatment coverage of a structure, including but not limited to differences in the extent that accessible and inaccessible areas can reasonable be treated, unless said differences in treatment coverage are clearly and conspicuously stated;

(5) any representation that a service, method, product, pesticide, or device, or combination thereof, that is not designed to treat all potentially infested wood in a structure, both accessible and inaccessible, will be used to treat an entire structure for target pests;

(6) any statement or representation that a pest control service, product, pesticide, or device offers a general environmental protection or benefit, or that the pest control products, pesticides, or devices the licensee uses, the applications of such products, pesticides, or devices, or any of them, are "among the least toxic chemicals known," "relatively non-toxic," "pollution approved," "environmentally aware," "environmentally sensitive," "environmentally preferable," "environmentally benign," or "contains all natural ingredients";

(7) any unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading statement concerning the composition of a pest control service, method, product, pesticide or device;

(8) any unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading statement concerning the effectiveness of a pest control service, method, product, pesticide or device;

(9) any unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading statement about the value of a pest control product for purposes other than as a pesticide or pest control device;

(10) any unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading comparison of pest control services, methods, products, pesticides or devices;

(11) any statement or representation that a pesticide or device is certified, sponsored, recommended, endorsed, or approved by any agency of the Federal Government or

the State of California, including but not limited to, "tested by the Department of the Interior," "EPA approved," "EPA registered," "approved by the Structural Pest Control Board," or "recommended by the Structural Pest Control Board";

(12) a statement which is literally true but is used in such a way as to give an unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading impression to the consumer;

(13) claims as to the safety of a pesticide application, a pesticide or pesticide ingredients, including statements such as "safe," "nonpoisonous," "non-injurious," "harmless" or "nontoxic to humans and pest" with or without such a qualifying phrase as "when used as directed";

(14) claims that the pesticides and other substances the licensee applies, the application of such pesticides, or any other use of them are comparatively safe or free from risk or harm;

(15) claims regarding services and products for which the licensee does not have substantiation in the form of tests, analysis, research, studies, or other evidence that was conducted and evaluated in an objective manner by persons qualified to do so, using procedures generally accepted by others in the profession or science to yield accurate and reliable results; and

(16) any statement or representation concerning structural pest control that is conditioned or subject to any requirement, condition, limitation, disclaimer or waiver, that is not immediately followed by a clear and conspicuous statement of said requirement, condition, limitation, disclaimer or waiver