By BIOSECURITY AUTHORITY OF FIJI

Buying a home is the largest single investment for the average Fijian family today and protecting it from damage is a high priority. One of the threats facing homeowners in the country is termites. Repairing termite damage in your homes can easily cost thousands of dollars and one of the best ways people can protect their homes and properties from infestation is to know about the different types of termites and how to treat them.

In Fiji, the majority of the people are unaware of the different types of termites. There is the local termite called Nasutitermes which is different from the exotic introduced Asian Subterranean termite species. Local termites can be found infesting many homes in the Suva area. Many people facing problems from this termite often do not know that it is a local termite and can easily be treated or controlled with the help of local pest control agencies.

The Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) assists with treatment and control of the introduced Asian Subterranean termites.

This article looks at the three different types of termites in Fiji, how people can recognise the signs of these different types through the damage caused by them, and what can be done to protect their homes.

1. Drywood Termite Characteristics

- Lives in drywood and need very little moisture
- They are often found in structural timbers, framing, furniture and hardwood flooring
- Drywood termites cause serious damage to

structures, often long before they are discovered.

- Possible signs of infestation include droppings of sawdust-like pellets and wings left over from swarmers (winged termites).
- Drywood termites can build nests and dig tunnels in buildings.
- These tunnels inflict major damage because the wooden support beams can become weak and cause the building to lean or fall down.

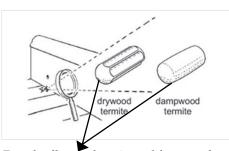


2. Dampwood Termites Characteristics

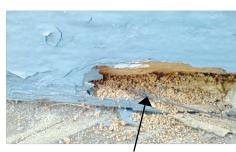
- Likes to live and feed in very moist wood because they need moisture e.g. dying wood, or in houses with leaking plumbing that keeps the wood wet
- Most dampwood termites don't require contact with the soil to survive.
- These termites usually do not infest buildings because there is not enough water in the wood

Warning signs of drywood and dampwood termite infestation

Infestation of drywood and dampwood termites is first indentified by the droppings they leave. These are small saw dust like pellets called frass. If you see these droppings then there is a possibility that a drywood and or dampwood termite colony is nearby.



Faecal pellets or droppings of dampwood and drywood termites.



Drywood and dampwood termites' faecal remains or droppings look like sawdust but are actually tiny pellets as shown by the arrow

Subterranean Termites Nasutitermes (local subterranean termite)

Similar in appearance to the



- Termites They can be easily distinguished from the Asian Subterranean Termite through its conehead structure
- Also attacks homes and buildings and are capable of causing widespread damage.
 - Build their nests on trees.

Warning signs of Nasutitermes infesta-

Nasutitermes termites often make ballooning nest on the trees or above the ground. If you see these types of nest near your houseit may be a sign of infestation.



Ballooning nests made by the Nasutitermes termites on the trees and above the ground.

Damage pattern caused by Nasutitermes

Nasutitermes termites usually destroy outer frameworks and materials used to build wall and structures as



shown

☐ New termite species -Asian Subterranean Termite

Characteristics



- Detected in Fiji in late 2009 Second most destructive termite in the world
- Lives underground but are able to reach for food above the ground building tunnels called mud tubes
- Dependent on moisture for survival Feeds on cellulose (fibre) found
- in wood, paper products, clothes and trees (mango, lemon, coconut and cassava etc)
- Have caused massive damages to houses, schools, and vegetation in Lautoka amounting to millions of dollars

Warning signs of Asian Subterranean termite infestation

Mud tubes or tunnels

Subterranean termites build mud tubes (also known as shelter tubes) to serve as bridges between their colonies and wood they consume. These tubes are made of tiny pieces of soil, wood and debris, and are used to protect the colony from predators and conserve moisture. If you see mud tunnels or markings shown on the walls as per the photo then subterranean termite nest maybe nearby.



Damage pattern caused by Asian Subterranean Termite

Subterranean termites create a distinctive honeycomb pattern in damaged wood, forming tunnels inside the softer spring wood and leaving the external grain intact. Seriously damaged wood breaks easily to show the inside of mud-or-soil-filled termite galleries as shown in the pictures.



Honeycomb pattern damage on the timber.



Damage on masonite board

What can you do to protect your home

- Always ensure the timber used to build your house is properly treated.
- Never disturb what you think may be termite activity as this will prompt the termites to move elsewhere which makes future detection and eradication more difficult. It may also result in damage being increased elsewhere.
- Remove all timber debris from under the house because timber debris encourages foraging termites.
- Move piles of timber or firewood away from the house, and store the timber in a dry, well-ventilated location. Firewood, lumber, cardboards, boxes, newspapers, and other cellulose materials attract termite activ ity and provide a source of food.
- If you discover a termite infested area, do not pour kerosene or spray insecticides such as Mortein but call for professional help or the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji to inspect the infested site.
- Do not let moisture accumulate near foundation as timbers are attracted to moisture and termites are more likely to get attracted to a structure if the soil next to the foundation is consistently moist
- Do not remove and transport any wooden materials, plants, furniture, personal belongings and soil from termite infested areas as it may result in spreading the termite
- Maintain hygiene and cleanliness around compounds and inside the house
- Open windows and curtains in the day to allow light and air into the house
- Inspect your homes, trees and compounds regularly
- Plumbing leaks, drainage problems and roof leaks should all be dealt with promptly as damp conditions attract termites.

