



The Asian Subterranean Termites (AST) swarming season in Fiji is usually from September- November every year. This is the time of the year when the AST flies away from its parent colonies to breed and start new colonies of their own. The Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) advises Fijians residing in and around the two (2) affected districts (certain parts of Lautoka and Labasa) to take special precautions during this time of the year as there may be visibility of more AST fliers than usual.

The Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) deems it necessary to caution members of the public with regards to AST issues. When travelling to and most importantly from Lautoka and Labasa to other areas – please check before leaving the affected areas that your personal belongings and vehicles (tyres, motor guards, storage trunks, grills, engine room and hard to see places) to make absolutely sure you are not giving any AST a free ride to your next destinations and even to your homes!

As we enter the swarming period (September-November), it is imperative to take special note of as much information pertaining to this pest and take necessary and proactive precautions where needed. In today's article we will take a brief look at what is an AST Swarm, how to ascertain AST presence in affected host materials and some of the immediate steps to be taken once you have confirmed or suspect its existence .

What is a termite swarm?

Swarming or flying termites are often seen near bright lights, garage doors, windows and door frames, columns supporting porches, dirt-filled porches and expansion joints. When termites swarm indoors, they will come out of double walls or wooden construction (baseboards, door frames, posts, etc.) through small holes. These are called "exit holes" and were created by worker termites.

A termite swarm will last usually about 30-40 minutes and the swarming termites will fly towards a light source, typically collecting around windows and sliding glass doors. If these termites cannot find moist soil or other host medium, they will die in a few hours from dehydration. Often homeowners find many dead swarmers (or sometimes just their wings) on window sills, counter tops, floors and around furniture. This is the aftermath of a termite swarm that has occurred in that area.

Most of the time, a termite swarm is the only time homeowners actually see termites or find out they have termite issues before damage is checked for and discovered. Mature termite colonies will produce winged reproductive termites (alates) that will fly off from the parent colony in great numbers. This is nature's way of allowing termites to spread and establish new colonies away from their parents colonies. Termite swarms can occur both indoors and outside. BAF, through its AST Project has Teams in Lautoka and Labasa, is working strenuously to contain and control the spread of this dreaded pest in Fiji, however, we need your support and cooperation! Please, do not move AST host materials (cellulose containing material like all types of wood/timber and wooden products, pot plants, paper products, cotton garments and root crops) out of Lautoka and Labasa without prior inspection and approval from BAF.

What to do if you see AST Swarms near your homes?

Fijians are requested to close all entry points like windows and doors from 6.30pm to 8pm and if you suspect or see any swarming within the

area, light small fires in a controlled area outside your homes. Termites will be attracted to the light and burn themselves in the fire. Fires should never be unattended and be put out fully prior to leaving the site. Any fuel used for these fires shall not be hazardous (without dark smoke and offending smells). As Termites are attracted to the light, people should use minimal lightings inside or outside dwellings during the active swarming periods.

Adhere to the following advice:

- Be on a lookout for AST swarms around your homes and neighborhood.
- Close all windows and doors in the evening and minimize the use of lights in your homes
- Identify swarming areas and report immediately to BAF without disturbing the swarms
- Not to move host material (soil, wooden materials, firewood, pot plants, long term stored paper and clothing materials etc) from an AST infested area to non-infested areas in Fiji.
- Not to receive any host materials (soil, wooden materials, firewood, pot plants, long term stored paper and clothing materials etc) of AST in their properties from known AST affected regions in Fiji without it being checked and certified by BAF
- Use of properly treated timber components in dwellings as a replacement to resist further termites infestations
- Expose the inside of your house to adequate sunlight and wind that assists in removing humidity and moisture which may discourage any termite infestation from building inside the house.
- Leave the surrounding of the house clean and dry.
- Avoid having gardens or flower beds too close to the house as they retain moisture which aids termite infestation.
- Do not leave firewood or timbers around the house in direct contact with the soil; instead properly stack them on raised blocks or other structures well above soil / ground level.
- Direct all water (waste and outflows) away from the homes and dispose in concealed soak pits
- Repair any water leakages in and around the homes immediately and always maintain a dry environment
- Follow the National Building Code of Fiji - recommended specifications for constructions buildings to resist termite activities

BAF provides services for and conducts treatment of AST infested sites only (houses, dwellings, trees and farms) which have been reported through the complaints registered at our Lautoka and Labasa Office. Once the initial treatments have been administered, BAF officers conduct multiple monitoring on a monthly basis to simply ensure that all AST infestation and risks have been eliminated from the concerned site. If you suspect AST infestation in your home, please do not wait, inform BAF immediately!

For Further Information Please Contact:

Biosecurity Authority of Fiji on 3312512 or Short Codes:
General Enquiries - 5994, Termites - 5996,
Giant Invasive Iguana (GII) - 5995, Animal Disease Surveillance - 5997
or email info@baf.com.fj, visit BAF website www.baf.com.fj