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## The Pest Bulletin

# Termite Swarming Alert!



It is estimated that *over two million homes* are damaged by termites every year. Unfortunately, most owners of these damaged homes are completely unaware that a colony of wood-destroying pests is silently eating away the wood in their homes. One of the most common ways people first learn they have termites is when they see winged termites, or their broken off wings, indoors.

Winged termites, called "swarmers", are the males and females that start new colonies. These fly up into the air, often

for just a few minutes, then land, lose their wings, pair up, and begin searching for places to start new colonies.

Termites swarm at various times of the year, but many come out in the early spring, often on a warm day after a rain. Hundreds of these pests may emerge from a single colony. They may all come out at once, or in batches over several days or weeks when the weather conditions are just right.

Swarmers serve as a warning that termites are present, but it's not necessarily an *early* warning of a problem. A termite colony is generally four to five years old before it begins to

produce its first swarmers. So if you see numbers of swarmers indoors, they are coming either from a colony that has already been around for at least four years, or from a mature colony that has invaded your home.

If you see swarmers indoors, call us right away for an inspection by a trained and certified professional. Termites are an invisible threat that you want to take care of properly the first time, before they cause more damage.



## Ants Are The TOP Concern

Survey after survey shows that on a national scale, more people have problems with ants than any other pest. It hasn't always been like this, but ants have emerged in recent years as the most common pest plaguing homes.

That's not surprising considering how successful this pest is. There are 750 different kinds of ants in this country, and they have an astounding ability to search out and quickly find new food sources in your home. Leave out crumbs or spilled liquid, and if there are ants wandering around, before you know it, they will find them and send an entire column of ants marching to the feast!

Ants have definite preferences as to what they will eat. Most kinds are strongly attracted to sweet materials, but some prefer high protein foods, or oils, grease and fats, or seeds. And to make matters



even more complicated, many ants will switch their preferences—favoring sweets exclusively, and then totally ignoring sweets to eat other foods.

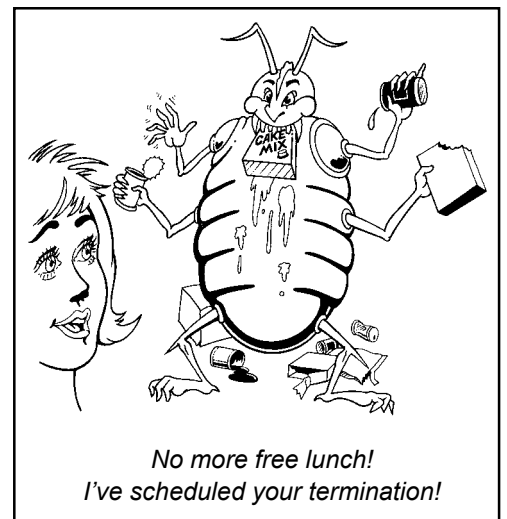
Ants can invade your home at any time. They are most often looking for food and water, but some invade because they find an acceptable spot to nest in, or when the weather turns too wet, hot, or cold outdoors.

Many ant colonies start aggressively searching indoors during the summer and fall because their colonies have become too large and there is less food available outdoors.

Ant problems don't go away on their own, so if you or a friend or relative have ants coming inside, keep counters clean, food containers sealed, trash emptied, and call us to provide professional control of these increasingly common pesky critters.

## Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Pests are often brought indoors without anyone noticing them. Some pests are well hidden, but you can catch others by vigilantly inspecting everything that enters your home, especially grocery bags, human and pet food, boxes, luggage, furniture, appliances, potted plants, cut flowers, and rolled up newspapers.



## E. Coli Can Be Transmitted by Flies

Most strains of *E. coli* are harmless, but one strain, called *E. coli* 0157:H7, can cause kidney failure and death. This is the strain that has been the cause of so many serious food contamination outbreaks and food recalls. Most of the hospitalizations have involved eating contaminated and undercooked beef, but outbreaks have also been traced to foods like spinach and lettuce, as well as unpasteurized milk, juice, and apple cider.



Research shows that flies, including the common house fly and certain fruit flies, can carry this bacteria, and may be responsible at times for its spread. Cows are the primary reservoirs for *E. coli*, and flies pick the bacteria up from cow droppings and carry it to whatever they land on.



Good fly prevention and control wherever food is prepared or eaten can reduce the risk from *E. coli* and certain other disease organisms.

## Dengue Fever Warnings

Cases of dengue fever have shown up in Texas, causing health experts to issue another strong warning that this mosquito-transmitted disease is poised to spread across the country. Up to 100 million cases of common dengue occur every year around the world, resulting in 22,000 deaths, mostly in children. It is only an occasional problem in this country, but because of increasing air travel, slack mosquito control in some areas, and a warming climate, the virus could spread here, just like West Nile virus did. West Nile virus first appeared in New York in 1999 and quickly spread throughout the United States. Dengue would be much more serious than West Nile virus if it were to spread here.

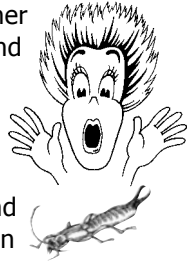
Dengue often results in just a mild fever with flu-like symptoms, but in more serious cases it causes severe fever and shock, bleeding, and can even lead to death if left untreated.



## Do Earwigs Crawl Into Ears?

Human ears are dark and moist, and some pests occasionally crawl into them. But according to data from John Hopkins emergency department and other hospitals, the most common foreign object extracted from people's ears are cockroaches. Other bugs removed from ears included honey bees, beetles, and ticks, but no earwigs are recorded as being found in ears.

The idea that earwigs sometimes crawl into ears, as the name implies they must, may have been an early "urban myth." No one is exactly sure how it all got started, but no less than Pliny the Elder, a prolific first century author and naturalist who also thought caterpillars originated from dew on radish leaves, believed that earwigs crawled into people's ears. That apparently is the earliest written record we have. We don't know if he actually saw an earwig in a person's ear, or just passed on a myth that may have been common in his day—an urban myth that still catches people's imaginations today.



## Oh My, Maggots!

An old, seldom-used remedy is coming back into favor among physicians. The treatment involves placing certain fly larvae, or maggots, in chronic wounds to clean them out. Maggot treatment has regained favor because of the growing number of bacteria strains that are resistant to antibiotics. The fly species used eats decaying tissue but not healthy flesh, so they can effectively clean a wound out in just a few days.

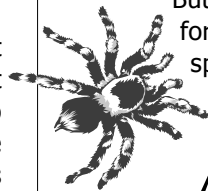
Although there is a definite *yuck factor* to maggot use, and some patients have reported extra pain when treated with larvae, they greatly speed healing of difficult wounds.



## Pest News Trivia

The title for the **Biggest Spider of the World** is currently held by the 11-inch Venezuelan Goliath Birdeater.

But this could all change. A hunt is underway in Peru for an uncatalogued species known to locals as the chicken-eating spider. Eyewitnesses claim they've seen this spider drag whole chickens into its burrow, often on the edge of jungle clearings.



A fossil rodent that would have been **the size of a small car** was recently discovered in Uruguay. Only the skull was found, but its enormous size of 20 inches long suggests a beast that probably weighed between 1,700 and 3,000 pounds. Good thing none of those are walking around under the house or on our rooftops!

Many people think of **bed bugs** as primarily being a problem of hotels and motels. But a recent major survey of pest management professionals across the country shows these pests are being found in *single family homes* and *apartments* even more often than *hotels* and *motels*. They also have been found, in order of decreasing frequency, in *college dormitories*, *nursing homes*, *shelters*, *hospitals*, *schools*, *public transportation*, *laundromats*, and sometimes but rarely so far, in *movie theaters*.

