

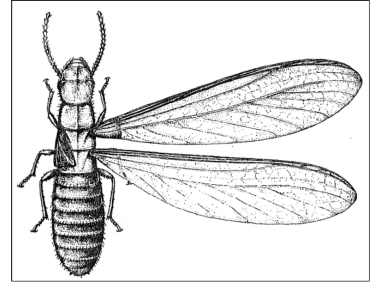
February 2008

SWARMING...BY THE NUMBERS

William H Robinson, PhD.



February begins the swarming season (late February to early May) for subterranean termites. For most companies, 70% of their termite service contracts will be sold during this period. The actual occurrence of the 'swarming event' is critical, because tools, chemicals, technicians must be in place, but it is quite variable. The swarming period in a region can be sooner or later than normal, especially if there are unusual temperatures and rainfall. While we can't control the weather, it would be helpful



to know what it might be doing to the swarming season. What are the environmental conditions that trigger termite swarming, and how can you use them to prepare for Spring '08.

Swarming. The process requires heat and water, and swarming is all about the link between these two. Termites swarm when 1) the local temperature has been in a certain (warm) range for a period of time, and 2) rainfall occurs near the end of this warm period. Winged termites require an accumulation of '*heat units*' to complete development before they are ready to leave the colony. Transformation into the winged form of thousands of nymphs takes time and a period of favorable temperatures in the nest. Heat units are used to determine when there have been favorable temperatures for enough time to transform all those nymphs into adults.

Heat units. These are calculated by adding the maximum and minimum daily temperature (you'll have to use Celsius), then divide that number by 2, and then subtract 4. The final number is the heat units accumulated that day for termite development—it can be positive or negative. For example: a spring day with a high of 50°F (10°C) and a low of 41°F (5°C) would produce +3.5 heat units [$10+5 = 15$, divide by 2 = 7.5, subtract 4 = 3.5]; a winter day with a high of 41°F (5°C) and a low of 32°F (0°C) would produce -1.5 heat units. A warm winter day may get the colony positive heat units; then a cold day would take away the gain with negative units. You can do these calculations safely at home: transform the daily highs and lows to Celsius, do the math, and keep track of the units. When the number of heat units hits 600, get ready!

Swarm Number. Termite swarming occurs when the colony accumulates 640 to 680 heat units. Following the date that the minimum number of heat units have been accumulated (for some regions it can be as low as 602), the winged forms in the colony should be ready. Now what? Rainfall.

Rainfall. Rainfall seems to be the trigger for swarming, once the heat units are in place. In general, swarming occurs within 3 days of the first (significant) spring rainfall following the minimum heat unit threshold date. Swarmers are released when there is the best chance for survival, to mate with other swarmers in the area, and form new colonies. After a rain when the humidity is high and the soil is wet is best.

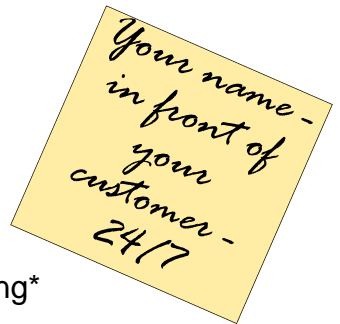
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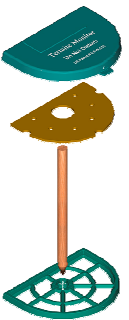
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- ✓ No bait means no pre-set inspection interval*
- ✓ You control placement and positioning*
- ✓ You run your business your way



Fast easy installation:

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- ✓ Quickly inspect using your fingers to open



Incredible marketing tool:

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*Always review your state's regs before implementing a non-bait termite monitoring program



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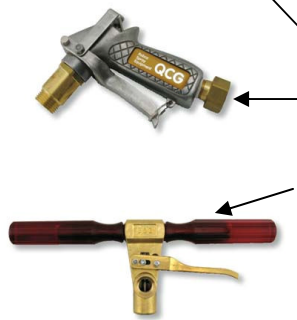
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