



Wet Foam, Dry Foam...Who Knew

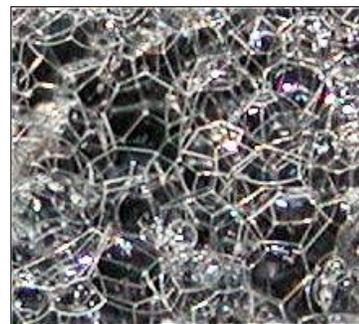
*It ain't so much
the things you don't know
that get you into trouble.
It's the things that you know
that just ain't so.*

A. Ward

Common knowledge is that dry foam is best, but...that just ain't so.

Dry foam is primarily air bubbles and a little liquid. It will quickly fill a void, but mostly with air! Wet foam will also fill a void, but quickly delivers the liquid it carries to the surrounding surfaces.

Foam is a mixture of surfactant (soap) and a liquid, and the addition of air to make bubbles. Once it is applied, foam is not intended to remain on the treated surface, but to collapse so the liquid forms a surface residue. Dry foam is produced with a large amount of surfactant and a small amount of liquid (insecticide). The bubbles in dry foam are small and they are relatively stable for a long time. There is little liquid insecticide to drain from the bubbles to the surface.



Empty matrix of dry foam

Wet foam is an effective means of spreading liquid insecticide over substrates that are difficult to treat with straight liquid. Wet foam goes through distinct stages from development to collapse. **Stage 1** – Immediately after development the bubbles are large and cover the surface. The transparent shell of each bubble is the surfactant, and the liquid (insecticide) is held between the shell walls. During this stage foam moves easily across a surface and in narrow spaces. **Stage 2** – Liquid begins to drain from the shell; gravity pulls it to the surface. Bubbles break and become smaller; as the liquid drains from the shell walls they break. This foam doesn't move but remains in place. **Stage 3** – The foam collapse is complete and all that remains are small bubbles along the edge. All of the liquid carried in the bubbles is now a residue on the substrate.

Wet foam applied to the void beneath a concrete slab will spread around obstacles and over an uneven soil surface. Within a few minutes the foam collapses and the termiticide liquid is absorbed into the top layer of soil. Wet foam can 'carry' enough liquid to treat the surface and create a treatment zone below the surface.

Dry foam is generally not an effective delivery system for liquid insecticide. In this type foam there is a large amount of surfactant and a small amount of liquid. The bubbles are primarily the shell of the surfactant, there is relatively little liquid insecticide. The liquid quickly drains from the bubbles, and leaves the foam matrix in place. The matrix is very stable and may remain for a long time. The clear and shiny matrix is primarily a surfactant shell structure, and has little insecticide residue.

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