



## Termite Control Workshop for Homeowners: October 24

What every homeowner needs to know about termites and termite control.

Did you know that Nebraska homeowners pay more than \$1 million each year for termite treatments? Professional treatment is a major expense for a homeowner. Why does it cost so much? Treatment estimates from different pest control companies can differ by \$1000 or more. Why are the estimates so different?

A very low estimate may indicate inadequate insecticide rates, volumes and treatment procedures will be used in the treatment of your home. Post-treatment levels of insecticide in the soil may be inadequate to

fully protect your home against re-infestation. Conversely, a high bid does not necessarily mean that a proper treatment will be done. How can you make sure that your home will be treated properly and protected from re-infestation?

Come to the Lancaster County Extension office on October 24, 6:30-9:30 p.m. We will teach you everything you need to know to understand how a proper treatment should be done and how to estimate what the cost should be. There will be a \$5.00-per-home-unit fee for this workshop. The fee will cover easy-to-understand reference materials. (BPO)

## Garden residue aids wildlife

As you give your vegetable garden a final fall clean up this year, consider leaving some plant residue for wildlife. Leave bean plants and beans too mature to be harvested, corn stalks with nubbin ears that never grew big enough to be harvested, oversized summer squash, winter squash and pumpkins with soft spots or frost damage, leafy vegetables that went to seed, and the tough outer leaves and stalks of broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and the other cole crops as an emergency food source for wildlife.

You can still clean up the garden to reduce the carryover of insects and diseases.

Remove and burn, or put out for trash pickup, any diseased plant materials, including corn, that have been infected with smut, wilt-stricken squash vines and blighted tomato and potato plants.

Till or plow under stands of weeds and mulch that might provide overwintering shelter for squash bugs, cucumber beetles,

Colorado potato beetles, European corn borers and other pests. Leave the residue of healthy plants that could serve rabbits, birds and, in rural areas, deer as a winter food reserve.

Don't be surprised if some of the less palatable foods stand untouched for weeks or even months. The beans and squash seeds will go quickly, while things like Brussels sprouts stalks and leaves may remain a long while. But when snow gets deep and bark is about the only other food available, even those tough old stalks may be consumed.

Leaving garden residues for wildlife may help take some of the pressure off fruit trees and other potential foods in your landscape. It's wise not to count on this, however, to protect your landscape plants from all harm. Mice will still be busy under the snow, so you'll still need to protect fruit trees and valuable landscape plants with either physical barriers or taste or odor repellents. (DJ)

## "Pest-proof" checklist



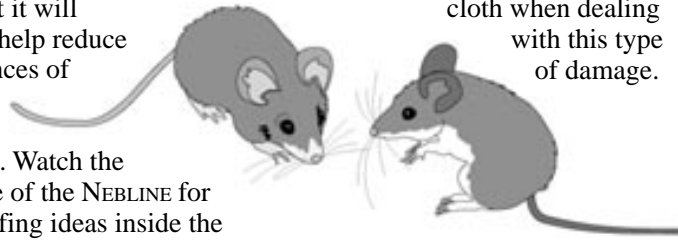
"Pest-proofing" may not keep every single animal or insect from wandering into your home, but it will certainly help reduce your chances of having pesty "visitors". Watch the next issue of the NEBLINE for pest-proofing ideas inside the home.

Your Home:

✓ **Are all the cracks around the outside of your house sealed so mice, rats, snakes, and insects can't squeeze in?** Use strong materials like cement, mortar or caulk to fill and seal cracks. Don't try to stuff cracks with cloth—it won't help.

✓ **Are there holes (or other rodent damage) in your home or garage?** Cover holes or rodent damage with hardware cloth that you can buy from a hardware store. Hardware cloth is a wire mesh that is both easy to use and inexpensive. Make sure the holes in the hardware cloth are not bigger than one-quarter inch. If you replace the damaged wood with new wood,

some animals (like squirrels) may chew right through it again. Cover new repairs with hardware cloth when dealing with this type of damage.



✓ **Do your doors, windows and screens fit tightly?** Doors, windows and screens should fit tightly. Caulk around openings (windows, doors). This treatment will help lower fuel bills in addition to keeping pests out.

✓ **Have you checked around your dryer vent and other openings to make sure mice are not going to use them as a way to get into your home?**

Your Property:

✓ **Have the leaves and grass clippings around your house been picked up and cleared away?** This will get rid of another hiding place for pests.

✓ **Do you keep your lawn mowed and clean up weedy or**

**overgrown areas?** These are all great hiding places for rodents, snakes and insects.

✓ **Are there piles of junk laying around your property (old bicycles, tires, trash)?** Rats and mice love clutter. Mosquitos and other insects are attracted to the standing water in old tire rims.

✓ **Do your garbage cans have tight lids?** Using lids will help keep rats, mice, flies and neighborhood animals from getting into your trash.

✓ **If you have a problem with rats or mice, do you use metal garbage cans?** Rats and mice can chew through cardboard or plastic trash containers.

✓ **Are your garbage cans stored away from the house?** Garbage cans attract pests.

✓ **If you recycle aluminum cans or collect pop cans, do you rinse the cans out and store them in a reusable box or container before taking them to a recycling center?** Cans with a little food or pop remaining are a great place for insects to live and breed. (SE)

## Yikes! Jumpin' Jiminy Crickets

Barb Ogg  
Extension Educator

Have you learned to open and close doors quickly to keep the crickets outside? Is there a chirping cricket hiding somewhere in the house, but you can't find it because it stops chirping when you walk near it? You aren't alone. This is the second year in a row that we have seen large crickets infestations—especially in more rural areas or where homes are near fields or pastures.

Why have there been so many crickets. We don't really know. Many insects have cycles when their populations increase temporarily in response to favorable conditions and later adjust to more normal levels. Most people think that insect outbreaks are related to weather conditions, but increases in the abundance of food and habitat, or decreases in natural enemies are just as likely to trigger population

explosions. The truth is that, with the exception of economic pests, most insects are not well studied and entomologists aren't sure what conditions trigger insect outbreaks.

It is interesting, and maybe not a coincidence, that we are also seeing abundant populations of grasshoppers. Grasshoppers and crickets are closely related insects—both belong to the order Orthoptera. One might think that closely related insects might respond in similar ways to favorable conditions.

How can this help us deal with the problem at hand. First, it is helpful to understand that a certain level of crickets is always present, but may be so low most years that you hardly notice. We all know that cricket chirping is a part of Nebraska life—just think how odd it would be to not have any nighttime noises at all. Okay, you say, but it really drives me nuts when a cricket inside the house keeps me awake at night.

The first step in cricket control is to check around the outside of your home and caulk or repair cracks and other spaces you find that may allow crickets to get inside. Look carefully around your home's foundation, doors and ground-level windows.

You can discourage crickets from entering your home by keeping nearby weeds and grass cut short and by removing piles or stacks of wood, brush, bricks and similar objects that are close to your house. This minimizes their hiding places and reduces the number of crickets that get inside.

If you've got a chirping cricket inside the house, don't reach for the bug spray; the following tip works better. Pour a small amount of cornmeal in the center of a glue board (glue boards are available at hardware stores). Place the glue board near where you hear the chirping sound. Within a day or two, you should have gotten your cricket.

## How did *that* get in here?

A door opens and a moth flies in, a millipede crawls through a crack in the foundation, your nephew brings a "shiny" beetle into the house, or a snake slithers through a basement window—all of these creatures have been reported in homes this time of year. Most are "accidental invaders"—creatures that came in by mistake. You will probably see more "accidental invaders" during the fall as they search out warmer quarters.

Most of these visitors are not "problem pests" because they won't be able to live very long in your home—it's

too dry and probably doesn't have food that will keep these "accidental invaders" alive.

When you find a pest, first find out what type of pest it is. Is it something that can be harmful to you or your family? Will the pest damage your belongings? Will it be able to live and breed in your home? Or, is it an accidental invader? If you're not sure what type of pest you have, call the Extension office at 441-7180 between 8:00 a.m. and

noon, Monday through Friday. Correct identification is very important—you may be asked to



bring in your specimen. There is no charge for identification services.

Once you've found out what pest you're dealing with, learn about the places it likes to live, what it likes to eat and its other habits. This will help you decide what type of control to use. Is the solution as simple as...

- ◆ using a fly swatter or broom (for flies, moths, or other insects that get into your home by mistake)?
- ◆ gently capturing the stray insect, spider or snake and releasing it outside?
- ◆ setting a mouse or rat trap (for rodents)?

- ◆ getting rid of whatever is attracting the pest to your home (overripe fruit)?
- ◆ making repairs or changing your home environment so pests can't get in or find it a comfortable place to live?

Or, does the pest cause a health risk (body lice), does it damage valuable property (termites) or cause a problem serious enough to use chemical control (cockroaches)? Before you decide on chemicals, answer these questions:

- ◆ Is the problem serious enough to use chemicals?
- ◆ Is it worth the risk?
- ◆ Would the chemicals be used

- inside or outside the house?
  - ◆ Would children, adults with health problems or pets be exposed to the chemicals?
  - ◆ Are there areas where food is stored, where you make your meals or where you eat that would be exposed to the chemicals?
- If you decide to use chemical controls, always carefully read and follow the directions on the product label each and every time you use the product. (SE)

