

# It's Springtime: Watch for Signs of Termites

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Extension Educator

When you are doing chores around the house this spring, keep an eye out for signs of termites. Termite activity increases during the springtime as temperatures warm up.

Like all insects, termites are cold-blooded animals and activity slows greatly when temperatures are cold. Unless they enter a structure below the frost line, termites are less active during Nebraska winters. But, when temperatures warm up in the spring, hungry termites are looking for food—which could be your house. Be on the lookout for:

—Mud tubes. To keep from becoming dehydrated, termites build and travel through mud tubes that are about the size of a pencil. If you break the tubes open, you may find light-colored worker termites. These innocent-looking insects are the ones that take small bites out of your house. Watch for mud tubes on the side of foundations, inside basement walls and where wood is close to the soil. Check for mud tubes if you are doing repair work; homeowners sometimes find mud tubes in wall voids while doing remodeling projects.

—Swarming termites. In the spring, some of the termites in a healthy colony develop wings and fly off to start new colonies. Swarming termites are dark brown to black, have two pairs of nearly equal-sized wings, and are weak flyers. Termites that swarm in the house is a cause for real concern, because it means that worker termites have found a way into the house.

—Termite damage is often hidden because termites prefer to stay inside the wood or wall void. Damaged wood can often be penetrated with a screwdriver or an icepick, revealing mud tubes lining the damaged wood. Tapping damaged wood with the handle of a screwdriver may produce a "hollow" sound.

—Pinholes in drywall or wallpaper. Termites in the wall void sometimes chew through drywall to search for new sources of wood. When they reach the light and dry air, they stop and plug the tiny hole with mud.

Places to particularly look for termite activity include wooden constructions in basement and crawl spaces, wood sills, joists, support posts, basement window frames.

What should you do if you find termite activity? **DO NOT PANIC!** Termites damage wood slowly; it takes from three to eight years for significant damage to result from a termite infestation in Nebraska.

Many people want to treat the termite infestation themselves to save money. But, because of the expertise needed to treat properly, homeowners should work with a termite control professional.

Do not be pressured into making a quick decision about purchasing a termite control service; the time spent gathering information can save you

hundreds, even thousands of dollars and will help you make more informed decisions.

To become more informed about termites, come to a workshop, "Everything Homeowners Need to Know about Termites and Termite Control." University Extension Educators, Barb Ogg, Dennis Ferraro and Pesticide Education Specialist, Clyde Ogg, will discuss termite biology and behavior, home inspection tips, differences between barrier and bait treatments, and how treatments should be done for best termite control. Tim Creger, pesticide program manager of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture will discuss why it is important for homeowners to read and understand termiticide labels.

This workshop will be held at the following five Nebraska locations:

May 10, Columbus, Agriculture Park Exhibit Hall; 822 15<sup>th</sup> Street; 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.,

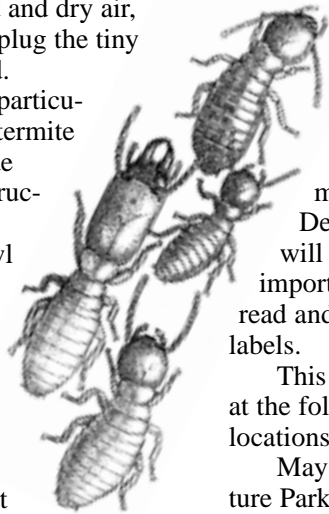
May 15, Omaha, Douglas County Extension Office; 8015 W. Center; 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.,

May 17, Auburn, 4-H Building, 7 - 10 p.m.,

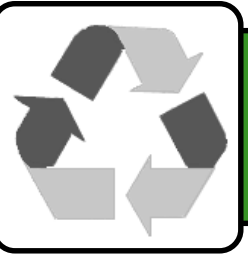
May 22, Lincoln, Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road; 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.,

May 24, Hastings, Adams County Fairgrounds, Activities Building, North Conference Room; 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

There is a \$20 registration fee for this workshop. In addition to training, participants will receive up-to-date reference materials. (BPO)

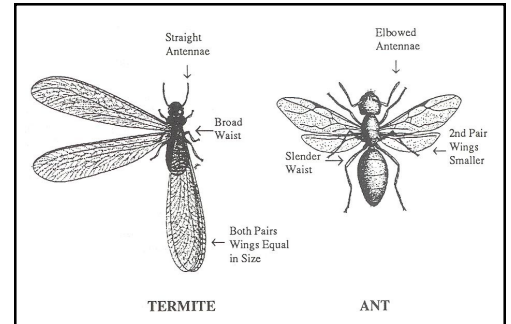


## Environmental Focus



# Don't Confuse Winged Termites With Ants

To the untrained eye, winged termites look a little like winged ants. To add to the confusion, termites and ants both swarm during the springtime. If you see a critter that you are unsure of, bring it to the Lancaster County Extension Office weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Our diagnostic services are free, and we can provide management tips for just about any pest problem that you bring to us. For those of you who have brought specimens to our office in the past, we have a new diagnostic lab with more space. We have a new digital microscope that will allow us to capture microscopic images for use on our webpage and the future NebLine articles. We hope that this state-of-the-art equipment and better facilities will help us serve you better. (BPO)



# We Love the Birds, But Sometimes They Drive Us Crazy!

Springtime is when birds are preoccupied with mating, nest building, and rearing young. Along with these activities, some species have a variety of behaviors that seem to be odd, annoying, or even frightening.

"Why are woodpeckers beating on my house?"

"I have birds repeatedly banging into my window. Why are they doing this? Will they hurt themselves?"

"Swallows have been trying to build a mud nest above our door. How do we discourage them?"

"Grackles are putting droppings in my bird bath (swimming pool). Why?"

"Blue jays and swallows have been attacking our cat and have swooped down on us! Why are they doing this? How can we protect ourselves from these dive-bombing birds?"

"My children found a baby bird that fell from a nest. Will the parents abandon the bird now that we've touched it?"

Call the extension office at 441-7180 to get your free copy of Springtime Bird FAQ's (Fact sheet 266) for answers to all of these bird behavior questions. Or visit us on-line at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/enviro/pest/bug.htm> (SC)

## Insects, Spiders, Mice and More

Use the office web site to get the information you need on pests and wildlife found in and around homes in Lancaster County. You have access to reliable information 24 hours a day/seven days a week. Visit <http://lancaster.unl.edu/enviro/pest/bug.htm>



- ants
- antlions
- aquatic insects
- bats
- beavers
- bees and wasp
- beetles and bugs
- birds
- centipedes and millipedes
- cockroaches
- crickets
- earthworms
- fabric pests
- fleas
- flies, gnats, and mosquitos
- grasshoppers
- insects as food

- insects in firewood
- human lice
- mice and rats
- moles
- pantry pests
- pest proofing
- sowbugs and pillbugs
- rabbits
- snakes, turtles, frogs, and lizards
- springtails
- squirrels
- termites
- ticks and Lyme disease
- voles
- wildlife damage and disease
- woodchucks (SC)



## Reminder!!

### Household Hazardous Waste Collection for Lancaster County Residents

Friday, May 18, Hickman, Second and Main; 3-6 p.m.

Saturday, May 19, Goodyear Tire and Rubber, 4021 N. 56 Street; 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Questions? Contact the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department (441-8040). (BPO)