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"Helping Nebraskans enhance their lives through research-based education."

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## SPECIAL INSERT: Be Yard Smart — a Guide to Environmental Gardening



## UNL Termite Workshops Can Help You Make Better Decisions about Termites

Barb Ogg, Ph.D.  
Extension Educator

When termites are discovered inside the home, many people panic and think they need to make a fast decision. They have a vision of termites eating wood like a buzz saw. The reality is, each termite takes a tiny bite of the wood and removes it, so termite damage actually occurs very slowly.

Because termite treatments are expensive — easily costing \$1,500 or more — it pays to get the facts before you make an ill-advised decision.

The recent development of new termiticides and baits means there are more treatment options than there were just ten years ago. Homeowners become confused when different companies recommend different treatment approaches.

One woman who recently called the extension office about termite treatments, asked, "How do ordinary people make decisions about termite treatments when the companies make such



Subterranean Termite Workers

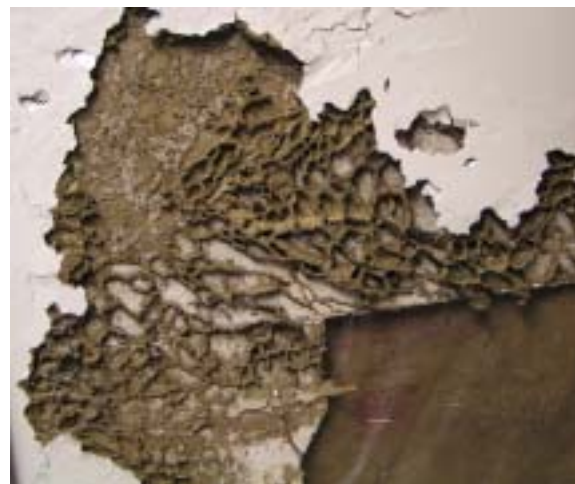
radically different recommendations? It is so confusing."

In 1995, UNL extension educators, Barb Ogg, Lancaster County and Dennis Ferraro, Douglas/Sarpy Counties developed educational workshops, *Everything Homeowners Need to Know about Termites and Termite Control*. These three-hour workshops teach basic termite biology, behavior, foraging habits, prevention tips, the latest about termite treatments and why treatments cost so much. Workshop information is based on research results.

The goal of these workshops is to educate homeowners so they can make better decisions and get effective treatments. In the last nine years, more than 1,450 people have attended 35 workshops. Results from a survey of persons attending these workshop indicate 98 percent of attendees had more confidence in their decision-making abilities after attending the workshop.



Termite Damage to House Beam



Termite Damage in Plaster Wall

Photos by Barb and Clyde Ogg

Many people are not sure how to proceed when faced with a termite infestation. But, there are logical, rational steps that can be taken:

**1. If you see an insect you think could be a termite, have it identified by an expert.** Your local county extension office should be able to identify termites for you.

**2. Have your house inspected.** It is important to know if there is a termite infestation inside your home.



Subterranean Termite Winged Reproductives

Subterranean termites (the kind we have in Nebraska) build mud tubes to connect their colony in the soil with wood above ground. Presence of mud tubes is a sign of termites.

Inspectors may also look for signs of termite swarms—small, black, winged insects that swarm in the spring.

**3. If evidence of active termites are found, you should contact several pest**

**control companies for bids.**

Some companies may suggest using a bait treatment, which is appealing because it is a non-invasive type of treatment. The other treatment option is the traditional "barrier" treatment. However, there are pro's and con's of both treatment approaches that homeowners should understand.

To make an intelligent decision about treatments, homeowners need detailed bids from each company, so they can compare how companies will treat their homes.

**4. Learn as much about termites as you can from an unbiased source such as Cooperative Extension.** The best way would be to attend one of the upcoming termite workshops. Another resource that may be helpful is the *Termite Handbook for Homeowners* and can be found on the Web: [pested.unl.edu/termite](http://pested.unl.edu/termite). This handbook is updated each spring with current information on termite treatments. Persons attending the termite workshop receive a copy of the handbook as part of their \$25 registration fee.

**5. Go through bids carefully.** You should realize bids will reflect the following costs to the pest control company:

- Cost of chemical or bait product.

- Labor (the men/women actually doing the job).
- Equipment costs (drills, drill bits, tank, rodding equipment, truck, etc.).
- Overhead (business rent, utilities).
- Insurance (which protects the company in case of an application problem).
- Profit.

What if bids are low? Beware. These companies may be skimping on chemical or on the labor necessary to do the job right.

**6. Schedule the treatment when you can be at home.**

Persons in Nebraska doing termiticide applications for hire must be certified by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) which means they are trained and have passed an examination. All certified individuals have received a green and red certification card and must carry it when doing applications — ask to see it.

**7. Watch the treatment and observe details.** If you have attended a termite workshop, you should be able to tell if the pest control technician is treating appropriately.

**Summary:** To fully understand the intricacies of termite treatments, it is time well spent to read and gather information before you make a decision.



### UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

## Everything Homeowners Need to Know About Termites and Termite Control

Date	Location
Tuesday, May 11, 6:30–9:30 p.m	Douglas/Sarpy County Extension Office 8015 W. Center Road, Omaha, (402) 444-7804
Thursday, May 13, 6:30–9:30 p.m	Lancaster Extension Education Center 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln, (402) 441-7180

For more information or to receive a brochure, contact one of the extension offices above or go to <http://lancaster.unl.edu/enviro/pest/workshops/TermiteWorkshop.html>

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