

Chapter 10

Economics of Termite Control

Properly done termite treatments are expensive. How can you make sure you're getting the most for your money? In this chapter, we will give you some tips about how to make the best possible decision to protect your home.

Choosing a Pest Control Company

It is important to resist the tendency to panic and make decisions too quickly before you have all the facts at hand. Too often, people panic when confronted by high pressure scare tactics of some pest control sales personnel. As in other businesses, pest control "salespeople" receive bonuses and sales commissions for bringing additional business to the pest control company. The first step is to resist any high pressure sales and take some time to understand all your options.

There are differences in termite bids and treatments. One of the most bewildering experiences is when there are hundreds of dollars difference between bids from different companies. The company with the lowest bid may be cutting corners to give you that low bid. Clients often report that nationally known companies bid the highest. This shouldn't be surprising because there are higher costs associated with owning a franchise. You need to be critical about what you are told, read as much as you can, filter through all the information, and do your best to make a final decision about treatments. It is also your responsibility to watch the pest control personnel do the treatment. They will be less likely to cut corners if you ask questions and watch them work.

In Nebraska, termites work slowly and are most active from about April through October. Spend a significant amount of time, at least several weeks gathering information. The time that you spend gathering information could save you hundreds of dollars and/or get you a better treatment.

You will need to have your house inspected. Once termites or termite damage is found, some inspectors may not thoroughly look for other infestations or damage. The inspector may move directly into a selling mode, figuring that this is his best shot at making his sale. This first inspection is very important, and the inspector needs to thoroughly inspect your home, looking for evidence of termites, termite damage, and structural problems that might complicate a treatment.



Figure 10-1. Choose a pest control professional that you trust to work with.

Information Gathering

Next, you will need to gather information to help you decide whether or not to treat your home and, if you decide to have it treated, what pest control company to hire. Before making any decisions, you need to do the following: 1) find out if there are live termites doing damage to the structure, 2) understand how each company will treat your situation, 3) investigate the knowledge, ability and experience of the person(s) who will actually do the application, and 4) determine whether the bids are reasonable, based on the size of your house. In addition, you will want to work with a company that has built a good reputation and has insurance in case there are any problems with the treatment.

Inspection. Arrange to have 4 - 5 professional pest companies inspect the structure and estimate the cost of the termite treatment. Request that all bids be put in writing and detail all aspects of the treatment. Make sure you have answers to the following questions and those on the next page:

1. Were live termites found? Where?
2. How extensive is the damage?
3. Is the damage old or new?
4. Is there evidence of a previous treatment? Is there anyway to determine when the treatment was done?
5. How much damage is evident? (Because damage is often hidden, further investigation may be needed beyond the capabilities of the pest control company. You may need to hire of a structural engineer to assess the full amount of damage to the structure.)

The answers to these questions may help you decide whether or not to have a termite treatment done or whether a partial or full treatment is needed. We generally recommend treating the structure only if termites are found inside the house. However, you should understand that evidence of termites and damaged wood can be in inaccessible areas that make it difficult or impossible to detect. There will be a clause on the inspection form that releases the inspector from finding termites or termite damage in hidden locations.

We generally don't recommend using a barrier as a preventative treatment. Some situations make treating the structure questionable. For example:

- If live termites are found in the yard (mulch or a stump) or the neighbor's house or garage, it does not make sense to treat. Instead, we recommend regular termite inspections.
- If damage is present, but there are no signs of an active infestation, it would be wise to have the entire structure inspected during the summer when termites are most active.
- If termites are present and it is evident that the structure was previously treated, you should try to find out when the treatment was done and whether it was chlordane. Prior to 1988, chlordane was the most widely used barrier treatment. Since chlordane was so long lived, a chlordane barrier may still be effective. It is wise not to interfere with a chlordane barrier unless active termites are in the structure. Then, only a partial treatment might be needed. Again, a complete inspection is needed to evaluate the situation.

Inspections most likely to find termites should take place from May–September. During the winter, termites often abandon their infestation because of the difficulty crossing the frost barrier.

Treatment Timing. In the case of a real estate transaction, it is the lending institution that requires a termite inspection of the property. The lending institution wants to make sure termites are not devaluing the home in case the owner defaults on the loan. It is also prudent for persons who purchase properties without borrowing money from a lending institution to have the property inspected for termites.

If termites are found during the course of a real estate inspection, the lending institution will probably require the property be treated before they lend money for its purchase. This can be a problem if the soil is frozen or saturated because a person who injects termiticide into the soil will be in violation of the label. Usually, the pest control company will treat the interior of the structure and wait on the exterior injection until soil conditions are appropriate. Although the terms of each real estate transaction vary, typically the person buying the property pays for the termite inspection, and the owner of the property pays for the treatment.

If termites or termite damage are found during the fall or winter, treatment (both chemical barrier and bait) can often be deferred until spring without having much more damage occur. This is because, in many infestations, termites must cross the frost barrier to gain entry into the structure. However, when termites enter a structure below the frost line, they can continue to feed and be active throughout the year even in the wintertime. In these cases, some treatment to prevent entry may be needed.

The Bidding Process. To discriminate between companies, ask each company to describe in detail the precise procedures that will be taken to treat the structure. Make sure they have answered the following questions:

1. What chemical will be used? What application rate (volume of diluted chemical) and concentration (percentage) will be applied? What pump pressure will be used? Current research as determined a slow rate of application (<25 psi) will be best. Ask for a copy of the termiticide label(s) that will be used.
2. Where will the chemical be applied? How deep around the basement?
3. How and where will holes be drilled to incorporate the chemical?
4. What special techniques will be used in areas where floor covering is present?
5. How will inaccessible areas and/or voids be treated?
6. How will the injection points (holes) be sealed?

The instructions for properly applying termiticides are given on all termiticide labels. You will need to compare answers to the questions, above, with the label to make sure that the company is using the proper technique to give the best treatment. In our experience, mistreatment occurs with one or more of the following scenarios:

A. The termiticide is not concentrated enough. If the insecticide is diluted with too much water, there may be too little insecticide to be effective. A recent change in the Nebraska law sets a minimum concentration for termiticide applications to existing structures. This minimum is the same concentration given on the termiticide label for preconstruction applications. For best protection, extension recommends that the maximum concentration allowed on the label be used for repellent termiticides. For non-repellent termiticides, the lower concentration will be adequate.

B. The volume of termiticide is too low. The volume of the chemical needed to give an adequate barrier is specifically given on the label (usually 4 gallons per 10 linear feet per foot of depth). If this volume used is less than given on the label, it will be difficult, even impossible, to get a barrier with no gaps in it. It may be a violation of the label for a termite control company to use less volume than is given on the label.

C. The barrier around a basement foundation is not deep enough. According to recent changes on the label, the termiticide must be injected four feet deep or to the

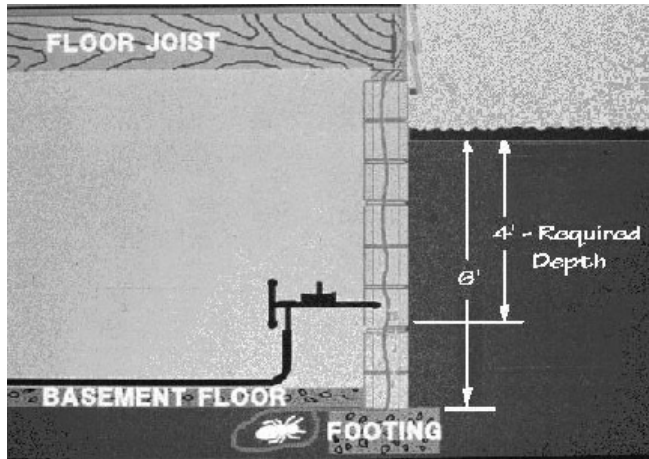


Figure 10-2. For best protection, the termiticide should be injected to the basement footings.

basement footings, which ever is less. Termiticide injected only four feet deep may not completely protect a home that has a deep basement because termites can go under the chemical. For best protection, extension recommends that the termiticide be injected to the basement footings.

D. Injection holes are not spaced closely enough together to provide an overlapping barrier. Some termiticide label directions are quite specific as to the distance injection holes should be spaced (i.e., Termidor), but others give a wide choice to the pest control professional as to what spacing should be used.

E. Trenching is not done. (See Chapter 6). The termiticide labels are quite specific in requiring trenching and rodding, but trenching is a time-consuming process. Some pest control technicians may completely omit the trenching procedure, which will give a more complete barrier treatment.

Environmental and Safety Concerns. You also need to ask what application methods will be practiced to insure a safe treatment for your family.

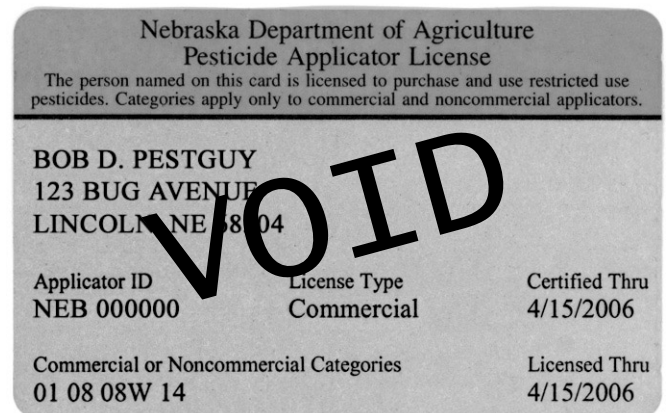
When the termiticide is being injected outside around the basement perimeter, will a second pest control technician be in the basement to make sure the chemical is not running through the foundation walls? This does not happen often but can. EPA regulations (1997) state that people present in the structure must be notified in the event of accidental leakage, and, after the application, the applicator is required to check for leaks. The label requires the termite control technicians to clean up areas if the chemical was left in areas other than that prescribed on the label before they leave the application site. In addition, all drill holes must be plugged after treatment.

Be wary of a company that says that it will be too dangerous for you to be at home during the termite treatment. With proper protective clothing, it should not be too dangerous for you to watch and observe the treatment.

References and Qualifications. Ask the pest control company for several references. Ask for the names of persons who have had a treatment by the company done within the last year. Call the references but understand that the company would not give you names of references if they thought there was a problem. Also, call the Better Business Bureau. The BBB will not make recommendations, but they can tell you if there have been any unresolved complaints against a specific company. When checking with the BBB, you should remember the pest control business is one that can tend to generate complaints, and most companies will try hard to resolve a problem to remove a complaint. Find out what type of insurance the company has. Liability insurance will cover accidents if you should sue the company.

What are the qualifications of the persons actually doing the treatment? Many times, the person who represents the company in the inspection and bidding process is not the same person who will be doing the treatment. All other things being equal, the most important factor is the competency of the person(s) who are actually doing the treatment because the placement of the insecticide is critical for the treatment success. How long has this person been in the pest control business? How many termite treatments has he/she done?

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



There is an exception to this rule. A person can work under the “direction supervision” of a licensed individual for 60 days before he/she needs to become licensed. This is called the “60-Day Rule”. This special provision allows for an unlicensed applicator to be in-training while he/she is studying to take the test. Each person working under the 60-Day Rule, must submit an application form to NDA within 10 days of the first pesticide use. The name and license number of the supervising pesticide applicator must be given on the application form.

Before any treatment is done, you should ask to see the licensee's card. If the person does not have a card, this could indicate that the person hasn't had much experience doing termite treatments, and you should be concerned. Before any application begins, contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture Pesticide Program at (402) 471-2394 to make sure the person has submitted the application form to legally apply pesticides under the 60-day rule.

If the 60-day application form has been submitted, you may still want to express your concern to the pest control company about an inexperienced person treating your house. If the Department of Agriculture has not received a 60-day application form from this individual, then this person may be in violation of Nebraska's Pesticide Law. Either way, you may feel better if his/her direct supervisor is present during the application.

Why Does It Cost So Much?

The strategy of a barrier treatment is to establish a continuous insecticide barrier between the colony in the soil and the wood in the home. To properly treat a house, insecticides must be applied in the soil around the foundation. In addition, insecticides must be injected into the soil, into hollow block walls, and under basement

and garage floor slabs. Since proper treatment includes the use of specialized equipment and large quantities of diluted insecticide, we don't recommend that an untrained homeowner attempt a termite treatment.

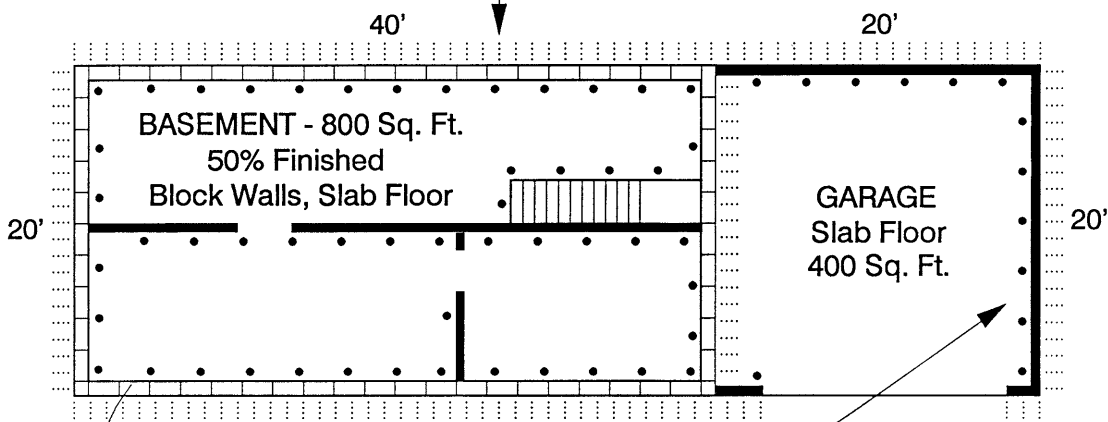
Termite infestations often cause much consternation because treatment is expensive. Homeowners ask, "Why does it cost so much?" The rest of this section will attempt to answer this question.

To look at differences between chemical costs, we will examine four different registered chemicals commonly used in termite treatments. To estimate the cost of the insecticide, we will be using the most appropriate labeled volume, concentration (i.e., how much insecticide is added to the water), and the depth of placement based on proper application techniques used for termite treatments of each chemical used in the examples. Although a similar exercise can be done for preconstruction treatment, our example will use a preexisting home with a basement, four feet into grade, and an attached two-car garage built on a concrete slab.

The cost of a termite treatment includes the expense of the insecticide used, labor, equipment, and other costs. To calculate the cost of insecticides, we must first determine the total amount of diluted insecticide that should be used.

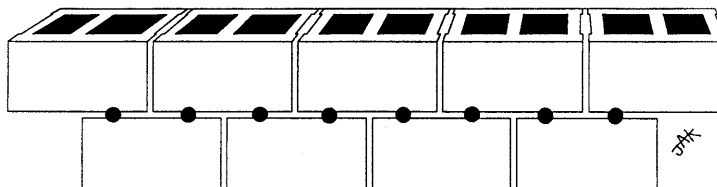
Example House with Basement, 4' into grade, and an attached two-car garage

Perimeter injection from grade to top of footing (4 feet deep) at 1-foot intervals, using a long, hollow rod.



Slab injection with chemical flow just under slab at 2-3 foot intervals.

All block basement walls injected at 8-inch intervals, one injection per void.



Traditional Complete Treatment

	DILUTED LIQUID OUR HOUSE:	DILUTED LIQUID YOUR HOUSE
HOUSE:		
Basement perimeter: 120 linear ft of trenching/rodding, 4 ft deep (includes common garage wall)		
Labeled rate=0.4 gallons/linear ft/ foot of depth		
Our rate=0.4 gallons/linear ft/ft depth x 120 linear ft x 4 ft depth =	192 gal.	_____
Block treatment: 120 linear ft.		
Rate=0.2 gallons/linear. ft x 120 ft. =	24 gal.	_____
Basement slab: 180 linear ft		
Rate= 0.4 gal./lin. ft x 180 ft. =	72 gal.	_____
GARAGE:		
Slab: 50 linear ft (do not include door space or common wall)		
Rate= 0.4 gal./linear ft x 50 ft. =	20 gal.	_____
Perimeter: 50 linear ft. (do not include door space), 1 ft deep		
Rate= 0.4 gal./linear ft x 50 ft. =	<u>20 gal.</u>	_____
Total insecticide needed, based on the label directions	328 gal.	_____

Perimeter Only Treatment (Termidor 80WG and Termidor SC)

	DILUTED LIQUID OUR HOUSE:	DILUTED LIQUID YOUR HOUSE:
HOUSE:		
Basement perimeter: 120 linear ft of trenching/rodding, 4 ft deep (includes common garage wall)		
Labeled rate=0.4 gallons/linear ft/ foot of depth		
Our rate=0.4 gallons/linear ft/ft depth x 120 linear ft x 4 ft depth =	192 gal.	_____
GARAGE:		
Perimeter: 50 linear ft. (do not include door space), 1 ft deep		
Rate= 0.4 gal./linear ft x 50 ft. =	<u>20 gal.</u>	_____
Total insecticide needed, based on the label directions	212 gal.	_____

35% less chemical used if pest control company and owner agree that a perimeter-only treatment is needed.

Cost of representative termiticides needed for the previous example as of April 2005:

Repellent Products:

Studies show that, as the concentration of repellent termiticides decreases in the soil over time, repellent products lose their effectiveness over time. This may result in termites penetrating the barrier and re-infesting structures. Repellent products do not adversely affect the colony. For maximum long-term effectiveness, we recommend using the highest labeled rates for repellent products. For effectiveness data of repellent products, refer to Table 6.2, Chapter 6, page 31.

bifenthrin (Talstar One™)

Labeled dilution range: 0.06% - 0.12%

Lowest dilution rate: 0.06% = 0.75 gal Talstar One + 99.25 gal water = 100 gal diluted Talstar

Pest control company cost for 0.75 gal Talstar One = \$121.00

Total cost at the 0.06% dilution: **328 gal. x \$121/100 gallons = \$396.88**

Increase the concentration to 0.12% and the cost of the termiticide in our example is \$793.76

We do not recommend the use of repellent termiticides like Talstar One as a perimeter-only product.

permethrin (for example, Permethrin TC®)

Labeled dilution range: 0.05 - 0.10%

Lowest label dilution: (0.05%) = 1.25 gal + 98.75 gal water = 100 gal diluted Permethrin TC®

Pest control company cost for 1.25 gallon jug Permethrin TC: \$92

Total cost at the 0.05% dilution: **328 gal. x \$92/100 gallons = \$301.76**

Increase the concentration to 0.10% and the cost of the termiticide in our example is \$603.52

We do not recommend the use of repellent termiticides like Permethrin TC as a perimeter-only product.

Non-Repellent Products:

Studies have shown that, as the concentration of non-repellent termiticides decreases in the soil over time, non-repellent products do better in maintaining their effectiveness than repellent products. Because termites cannot detect presence of non-repellent products, termite may transfer termiticide to colony mates adversely affecting the vitality of the colony. In most situations, a complete treatment using lowest dilution rates will adequately protect the structure. For effectiveness data of non-repellent products, refer to Table 6.1, Chapter 6, page 10.

fipronil (Termidor® SC)

Labeled dilution range: 0.06 - 0.12%, but studies show 0.06% is effective for use in most applications.

Lowest dilution: 0.06% = 78 oz + 99.25 gallons water = 100 gallons diluted Termidor® SC

Pest control company cost for 78 oz Termidor SC = \$163

Total cost of complete barrier treatment at 0.06% dilution:

328 gallons x \$163/100 gallons = \$534.64

Total cost of perimeter only treatment at 0.06% dilution:

212 gallons x \$163/100 gallons = \$345.56

fipronil (Termidor® 80 WG)

Labeled dilution range: 0.06 - 0.12%, but studies show 0.06% is effective for use in most applications.

Lowest dilution: 0.06% = 4-2.6 oz packs + 100 gallons water = 100 gal diluted Termidor® WG

Pest control company cost for 4-2.6 oz packs Termidor® 80 WG = \$160

Total cost of complete barrier treatment at 0.06% dilution:

328 gallons x \$160/100 gallons = \$524.80

Total cost of perimeter only treatment at 0.06% dilution:

212 gallons x \$160/100 gallons = \$339.20

imidacloprid (Premise® 75)

Labeled dilution range: 0.05 - 0.10%

Lowest labeled dilution (0.05%) = 4-2.25 oz packets + 100 gallons water = 100 gallons diluted Premise 75

Pest control company cost for 2-2.25 oz packets = \$136

Total cost for complete barrier treatment at 0.06% dilution:

328 gallons x \$136/100 gallons = \$446.08

As of May 2005, Premise® 75 is not labeled as a perimeter only product.

Labor. What is the approximate labor costs in our hypothetical example? For this treatment, we estimate the time requirement for two applicators to be 10-12 hours. This hour requirement is based on the time it takes to drill holes, the quantity of liquid that must be injected, sealing of the holes, and any other “finishing” work that must be done. The total bid price also will include cost and upkeep of the equipment used, safety equipment, and overhead, and profit for the pest control company. In addition, reputable pest control companies carry liability and other insurance policies that are a significant expense. We believe that for most companies, the costs associated with labor, equipment, overhead, and insurance will be greater than the cost of the insecticide for a typical treatment with a basement. We have calculated a realistic estimate for this treatment to be \$1500-\$1800. Since many houses are larger than this small house example, estimates for termite treatments can easily be \$3,000 or more.

Why are there variations in the bids for termite treatments? While some costs will be similar, especially when the same chemical is used by different companies, there can be variations in hourly rates paid to workers, variable insurance rates, and various overhead costs. Large companies may also get volume discounts on chemicals that smaller companies cannot get. What happens if the bid you get is lower than the cost of the chemical that should be used? A very low bid suggests that a company may not be applying the labeled insecticide rate (i.e., volume) for proper treatment or that the chemical may be diluted with too much water. Both of these situations can reduce the effectiveness of the treatment. Conversely, very high bids do not insure a “better” termite treatment. Differences in the sizes of the home and their structural oddities will result in different insecticide amounts and labor requirements for each termite job.

In our example, we have described how a complete barrier treatment should be done. Some termiticide applications require more labor than others because the label requires injections to be no more than 12-inches apart. For example, the Termidor label requires 12-inch rodding which may increase the cost of labor by 50 percent compared with other termiticides that allow 18-24-inch injections. To make Termidor more competitive with other termiticide products, some companies are proposing to do an exterior-only treatment, which would save them labor and some cost of the termiticide. Homeowners should understand what the treatment includes before making a final decision.

It has been suggested that an exterior-only treatment using non-repellent termiticides may be as effective as a complete exterior and interior treatment using either a repellent or non-repellent termiticide. Several university termite researchers are conducting exterior-only treatment experiments using the non-repellent termiticides fipronil (Termidor) and imidacloprid (Premise). Although the

results are generally positive, only three years of research has been conducted and it is not known what the ultimate length of protection will be with exterior-only treatments.

One researcher, Dr. Roger Gold, Texas A & M University reported that exterior-only treatments using fipronil (Termidor) did not stop termite feeding when termites had entered the structure through the center of the house (bath trap area) prior to the treatment being applied. This was presumably because the termites did not encounter the exterior chemical barrier. These results suggest that a partial treatment leaves various points of termite entry unprotected. Because of this and the difficulty in detecting all points of termite entry, we recommend a complete barrier treatment, (exterior perimeter and interior) for the best protection of your home.

Making Decisions

This is the toughest part. You can sift through all the information and hire a company to do the treatment and still end up with a problem situation that might not be the company’s fault. Sometimes structural problems or environmental problems exist that make a good treatment difficult or impossible.

Making sure it gets done right. How do you ensure that the maximum concentration will be used, and that the chemical will be injected deeply enough? The only way to know for sure is to be at home during the treatment, watch, and take notes. You might also have a loaded camera ready in case something doesn’t seem right. Ask questions. How large is the insecticide tank, for example? Observe how many times it is filled during the course of an application. This will tell you how much volume of chemical is used. How many gallons/packets of concentrated insecticide are added to each full tank? This will tell you the concentration that is being used. On each termiticide label, there is a table that tells the applicator how much insecticide to add to a specific amount of water for the exact concentration level. Get a copy of the label to verify the concentration being used.

Warranties. Before you sign anything, be sure to read the fine print. Most of us believe that a warranty is guaranteeing a quality of work or workmanship. In the case of termite treatments, you can think of a warranty as being similar to termite insurance. The company may offer a warranty for a year. After that, you will need to pay an annual inspection fee that is typically 1/10 of the cost of a treatment. If termites are found during the time you are under warranty, the company will retreat in the area where termites were found (this is called a spot treatment). They will not completely retreat your home because it is assumed that the treatment was done correctly, but there is an inadvertent break in the barrier to allow termites entry to the house. In many cases, a warranty is void after a certain number of years. Whether or not you choose to

carry a warranty depends on how much risk you wish to assume.

Insurance. We have heard about companies that say they are offering termite insurance, usually to the buyer of a home after a clean inspection for a real estate transaction. Often this “termite insurance” seems reasonably priced. What will happen if you get termites? Will you get a complete barrier treatment, or will the company only do a spot treatment in the area where the termites have been found? A spot treatment may be of little value because the termites could enter the structure somewhere else. If you decide to invest in termite insurance, make sure that a complete treatment (either chemical barrier or bait) will be given to you. Otherwise, the insurance is of little value.

Economics of Bait Treatments

Bait treatments often cost as much as barrier treatments do. Why does a bait treatment cost so much? Obviously, there isn't the high cost of chemicals, but the users of this new technology are paying for the research and development costs that the manufacturer had with the bait. The pest control company also has a large investment in training employees to learn how to use the bait. Someone must check the bait stations and install the baits on an ongoing basis. A sophisticated computer system may

be used to keep track of all the bait stations and record information.

According to recent information from pest control companies, the cost of bait treatments is about \$9–\$10 per linear foot. Multiply \$10 by the perimeter of your house and that will be a good guess as to what a bait treatment will cost you. This cost will approximate the cost of a well-done chemical treatment. As time passes and there are more bait products competing for the market, the price could go down.

Warranties/Insurance of Bait Treatments.

Regardless of the claims made by the manufacturer, there is no guarantee that the termite colony will be eliminated when baits are used. A problem with bait treatments is that a homeowner could spend thousands of dollars and if the termites do not feed on the wood or bait in the bait stations, the colony is not eliminated nor is the house protected. You should ask each company what you have paid for in the event that termites don't feed on the wood or bait in the bait stations.

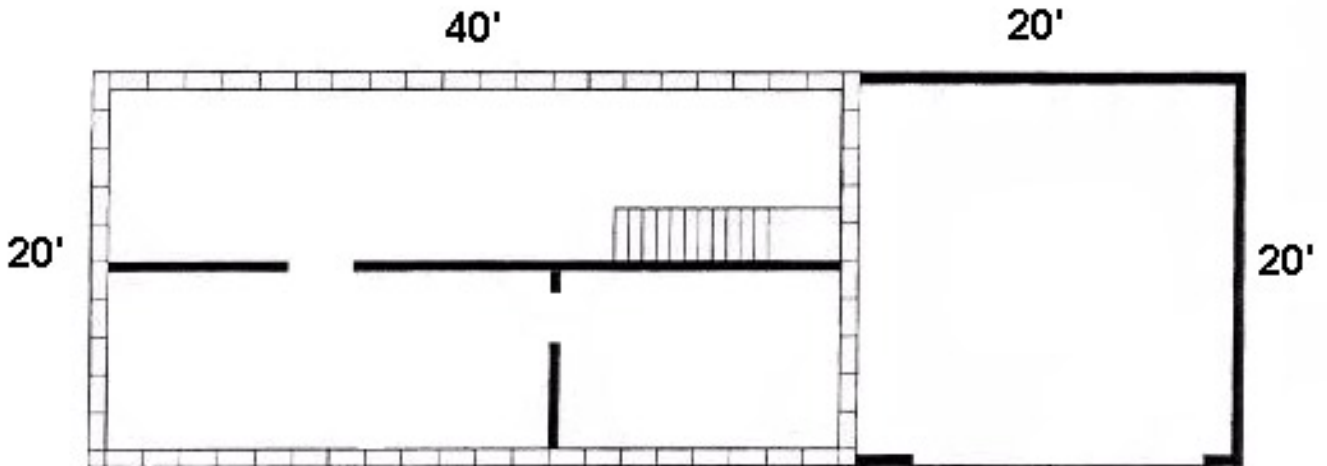
Some companies may offer a warranty against future damage to your home. The problem with this type of warranty is proving when the damage occurred. It is possible to determine future damage only if you can document the extent of existing damage. With the exception of a newly constructed house, it is nearly impossible to prove when the damage occurred. Collecting on this type of warranty would be difficult. Be cautious.

Perimeter: 160 linear ft
 Common estimate: 160 x \$10/linear ft =

ESTIMATED COST
 OUR HOUSE:

\$1600

ESTIMATED COST
 YOUR HOUSE:



$$\text{Total Perimeter} = (40+20) + (40+20) + 20 + 20 = 160'$$

Summary

Termite treatments are expensive, and when done properly, the cost is justified because of the significant cost of chemical or bait, equipment, labor, and expertise to do the job right. The difference between a good treatment and a poor one is often the persons who actually do the treatment. When choosing a pest control company ask about the qualifications and experience of the persons who will do the treatment.

Baits or Barriers?

The treatment you choose depends on your situation.

Buildings that have a history of frequent reinfestation or have structural oddities that interfere with the successful implementation of a conventional termiticide barrier application are the best candidates for a bait treatment.

Homeowners who are strongly opposed to having floors drilled or who are strongly opposed to the use of pesticides might be happier with a bait treatment. Although conventional termiticide barrier applications pose no significant hazard to humans, pets or the environment, some individuals are still apprehensive about this approach.

Homeowners on limited budgets may find the cost of conventional barrier treatments less expensive than bait treatments.

Homeowners with a serious termite infestation or those involved in a real estate transaction may be better candidates for the application of a termiticide barrier.

People living in attached housing like condos or townhouses where the entire structure cannot be treated might be smarter to choose the conventional termiticide barrier approach.

Even though there is an over-the-counter bait product available, we recommend that homeowners work with a competent pest control professional if they have termite problems.

Which approach is best?

Barrier Termiticides

Advantages:

- May be less expensive
- Application method well understood
- “Tried and true”
- Control may be faster, an important consideration in real estate transactions

Disadvantages:

- More disruptive and intrusive
- Higher risk from some chemicals
- Termiticides sometimes break down rapidly in soil
- Barriers may fail

- Termiticides must be applied carefully to ensure a proper barrier
- Certain structural features can make successful barrier treatments difficult or nearly impossible

Termiticide Baits

Advantages:

- Fewer environmental/health risks
- Less disruptive and intrusive - no drilling
- May destroy entire colony (but no way to verify this)
- An alternative to chemical barriers for difficult-to-treat structures

Disadvantages:

- May be more expensive
- More complicated; PMP's need special training
- Longer to take effect, not practical for real estate transfers. Damage may continue unless some measures are taken to prevent entry.
- Passive control, depend on termites “finding” the bait.
- Not possible to ensure that the colony has been destroyed.

Problem Structures

Example 1. Houses that have heating ducts imbedded under the basement floor (a plenum construction) may be extremely difficult to treat. You may not even find a company that is willing to treat because of the increase possibility of contaminating the home. In this case, you may want to use a bait treatment.

Example 2. An older home that has an old cistern or well close to the foundation or a house that is close to a stream or lake. It may be impossible to do a barrier treatment because of the possibility of contaminating the well or water. One solution might be to plug the well or cistern with bentonite clay and fill it with soil. After it is filled properly, a chemical treatment may be done with no harm to the environment. For more information regarding how to plug a well, contact your local extension office.

Another solution is to treat the soil near the foundation, cistern or well using the treated backfill method. As these areas are trenched, the soil should be placed on a waterproof tarp. The termiticide is then applied to the soil on the tarp, mixed, and the treated soil is then placed back into the trench. Many pest control companies would rather not treat using this method because of the extra labor involved and may not want to treat at all because of the potential liability should the water supply become contaminated.

Example 3. A home that has had gravel, rocks, or other large pieces thrown into the fill next to or underneath the foundation. Achieving a good barrier treatment may be impossible unless the rubble is removed. Again, this is a situation where it might be more reasonable to use a bait treatment.