

## Don't Panic When Termites Swarm, Specialist Says; Calm Action Best

The termite probably scares more people, in an economic sense, than any other insect. Yet they work slowly and the damage they do can be repaired, according to Dr. Dale Bray, chairman of the department of entomology and applied ecology at the University of Delaware.

The springtime swarming of termites may be the first warning homeowners have that termites are living nearby and may be moving nearby. In the spring some of the winged, reproductive members of each termite colony decide to start their own families, so they swarm to locate a place to settle down. If you see swarms, look at

some of the insects closely. If their bodies are "pinched" in the middle they probably are ants and you can relax, Bray says. The body of a termite is about the same thickness from one end to the other. Examine the wings also, he advises. There is usually a dark spot on each of the front wings of the ant, termites do not have these spots.

Termites actually live in the soil but wood is their only food so they build a network of tiny tunnels to reach the wood in the house. The beams in the cellar or the sill under the front door—in fact, any part of the house made of wood—is

exactly what they are looking for. They will even go through a concrete block wall with ease, if there is a tiny crack in it.

Since termites remain hidden except when forming new colonies in the spring, these swarms may be your only visible warning of their presence. Termites seldom break through the surface of the wood on which they feed, so you cannot tell if they are present simply by looking at the wooden parts of the house.

Nonetheless, in addition to watching for termite swarms, there are other ways to check for termite infestation, Bray points out. Mud-like tubes, about one-quarter inch wide, on foundation walls are their way of getting from their home into yours. If you find these tubes, break them and look for worker termites, which are small white insects without wings.

Also, check all points of the house where wood touches the ground or where the concrete slab meets the walls of the house. Use an ice pick and check for places where the pick will go into the wood easily.

A saw-dust like powder around the tunnels is left by insects other than termites; these insects are not as destructive as termites.

If you are sure your home does have termites, have it treated to get rid of them, recommends Bray. The homeowner can do it himself, but

this is not recommended because it is difficult to do a thorough job.

For this reason, deal only with reliable exterminators, he cautions. The job should be done within a few weeks after you discover the insects.

But, don't be rushed into action, he adds. Termites work slowly; there is no great hurry, provided you do something within a few weeks. Don't be frightened into hiring the first pest control operator that comes along.

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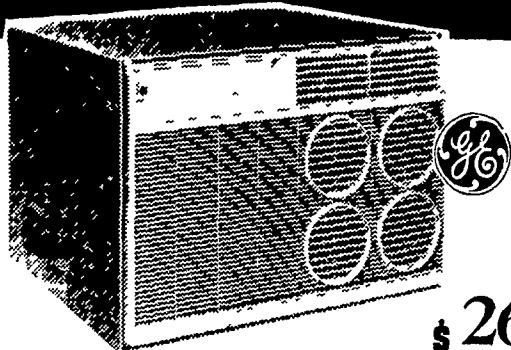
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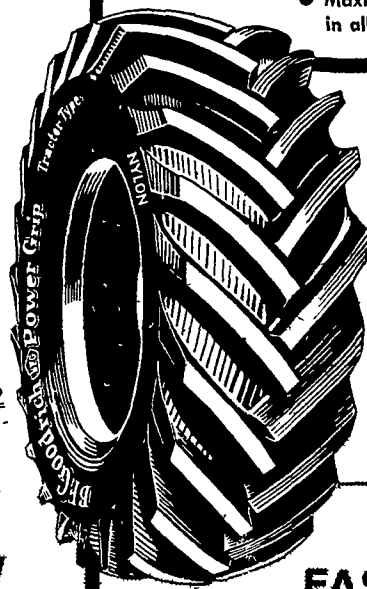
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