

# Ants and termites are swarming

NEWARK, Del. — It's not just the birds and bees that come out in the spring. So, alas, do the carpenter ants and termites.

If you discover a swarm of winged insects in your home, try not to panic, says University of Delaware extension agriculture agent Derby Walker. Remember, you house won't fall down overnight. Whether your winged in-

sects turn out to be termites or carpenter ants, the problem can be corrected.

Proper control depends on correct identification. At first glance, ants resemble termites, but several differences are evident when you look closely. Ants have a pinched waist, and their hind wings are shorter than their front pair. An ant's antennae are

elbowed.

Termites have a straight body with no waist, two matching pairs of wings, and antennae that resemble beads glued together.

If the swarming insects in your home prove to be termites, it will likely come as quite a shock. Until they swarmed, you never saw them because termites eat through the inside of wood, rarely breaking

through the surface. When a colony becomes too crowded, it divides. The winged reproductive termites swarm as they look for a new place to live.

You can detect termites even if they don't swarm by inspecting your house regularly, Walker says. Termites locate their colonies in soil, close to moisture. They often build networks of mud tunnels leading to sources of food — the wood inside homes.

Look for tunnels in your crawl space or along the foundation of your house. However, even if you don't find tunnels, termites might be munching through your woodwork. Sometimes they get in through a crack in a concrete block. Check for soft spots in woodwork, then poke them with an ice pick to look for signs of worker termites or their damage.

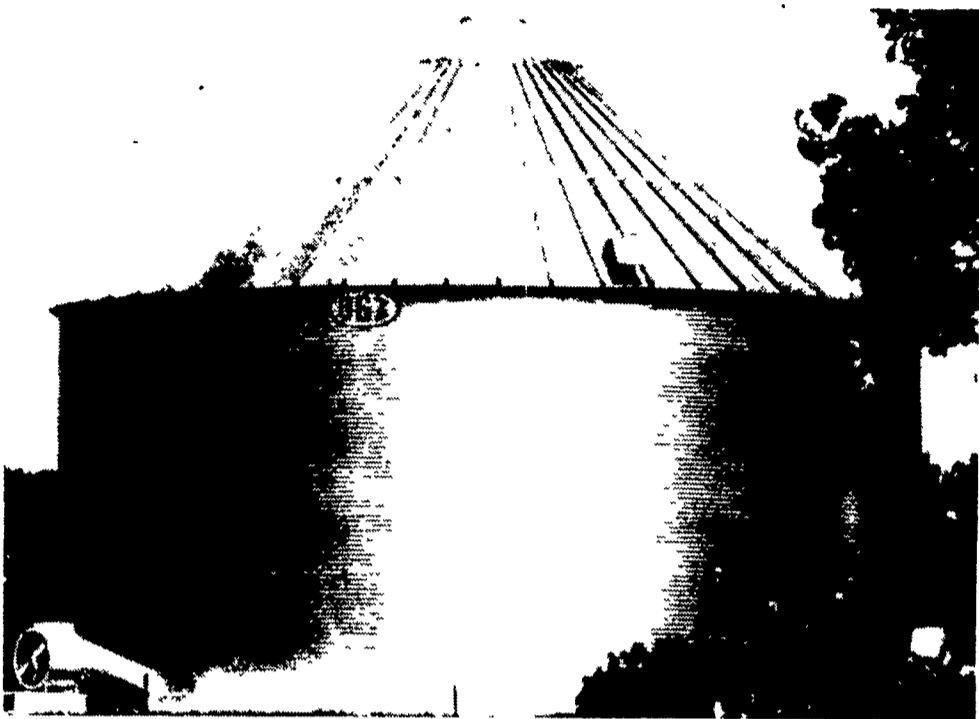
If you find evidence, call several reputable pest control companies and ask for detailed estimates. A county extension office can provide a list of qualified pest control operators.

If your swarming insects are carpenter ants rather than termites, you may be able to control the problem yourself. Carpenter ants don't eat wood, but they do tunnel through it to make their nests. To avoid structural damage to your home, you'll have to locate the nest and destroy it.

Look for a nest where moisture can collect — around windowsills, chimneys, and water pipes. If you have patience, try placing small crumbs of food in the general area you suspect. Then watch where the ants carry the food. If you're lucky, you'll be able to locate the nest. Destroy it with an approved pesticide.



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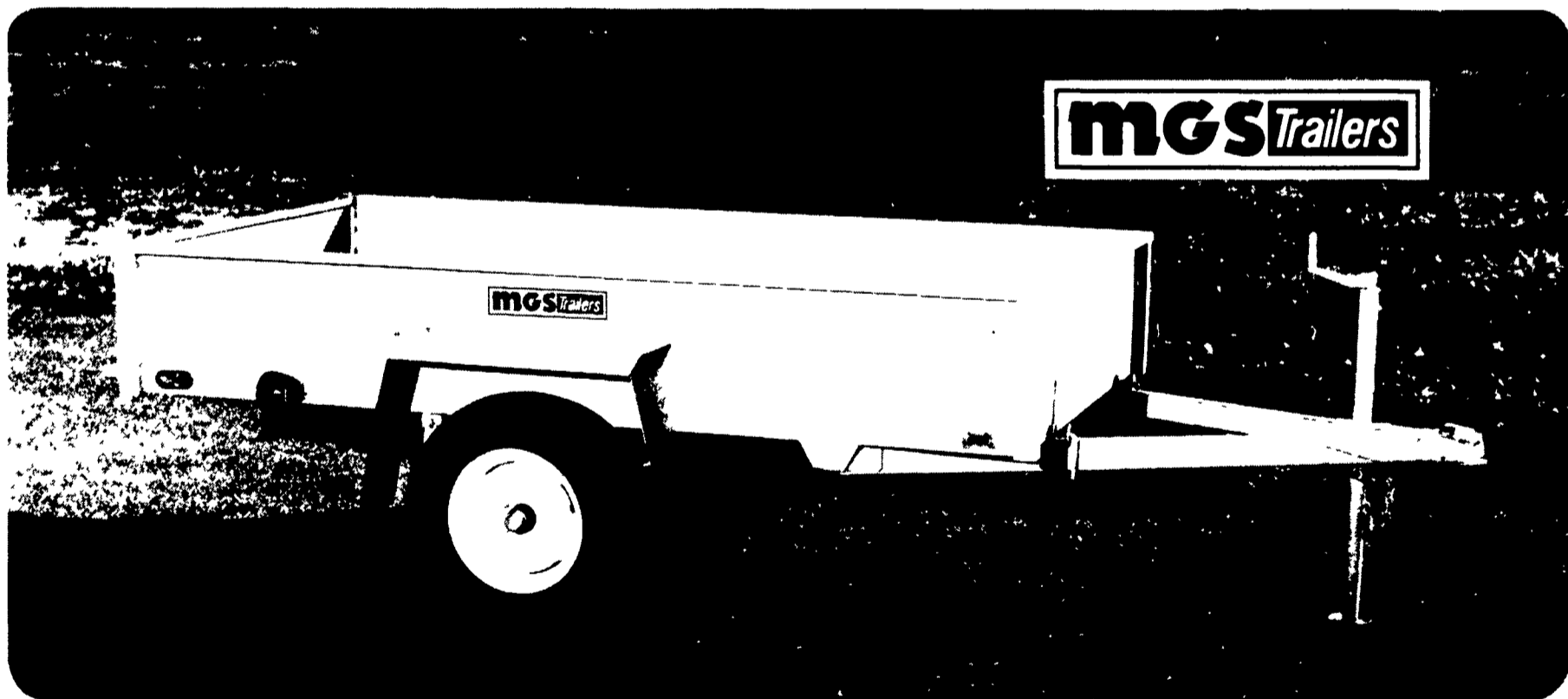
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