

# TERMITES



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### Physical Identification

In the alate stage, termites look like flying ants. However, these insects can be distinguished by inspecting their wings, antennae and abdomen. Termites have straight antennae and two sets of wings that are equal length. They also have two body segments with a straight abdomen.

### Feeding

Termites are detritivores, consuming dead plants at any level of decomposition. They also play a vital role in the ecosystem by recycling waste material such as dead wood, faeces and plants. Many species eat cellulose, having a specialised midgut that breaks down the fibre.

### Lifecycle

#### *Mating Flight*

The life cycle of the termite begins with a mating flight, wherein swarming winged reproductive males and females leave established colonies and procreate.

After fertilization, winged termites land and shed their wings, going on to form new colonies. These insects then become the king or queen termites of their newly established colonies. The queen and king termites are at the center of the termite life cycle and are responsible for reproduction.

#### *Eggs*

After the fertilized queen lays her eggs, they hatch into pale white larvae.

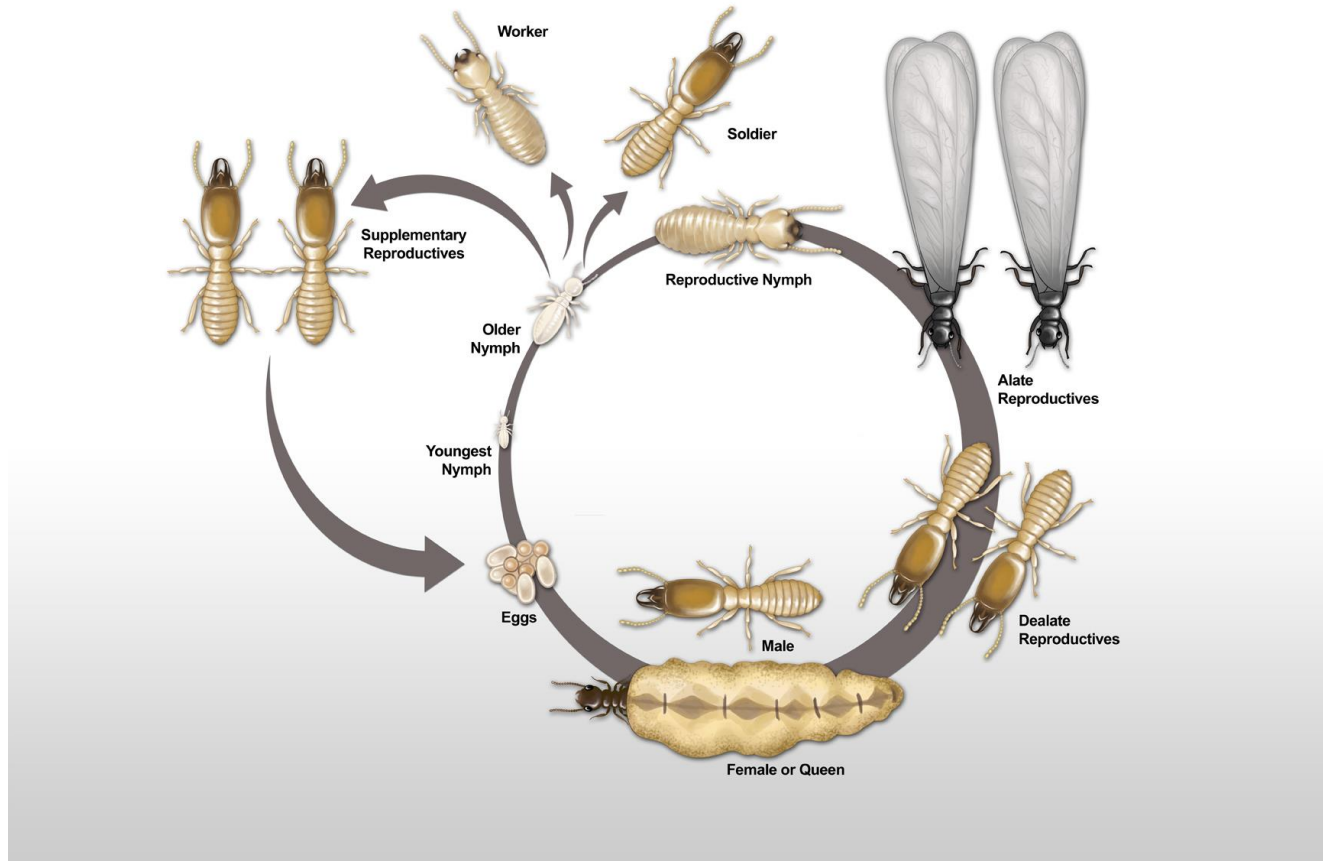
#### *Molting*

Eggs hatch into larvae and molt (shed their exoskeletons) to develop into workers, soldiers, primary reproductives and secondary reproductives. A nymph is a young termite that is going through molts to become a reproductive.

The termite growth process begins with a process called molting. First, a termite develops a soft exoskeleton under its current, hard exoskeleton. Then, once the termite has reached maturity, its outermost skeleton splits open, and the new exoskeleton enlarges and hardens. This molting process continues throughout a termite's life cycle based on the colony's needs.

### **Larvae**

Over the course of several molts, these larvae grow to assume a role in one of the three termite colony castes: workers, soldiers and reproductive termites, also known as alates.



### **Harbourage**

There are three essential things Termites need to survive. These are all required regularly and on a daily basis.

#### **Food**

Although structural timber and/or decorative timber is the obvious food source for these hungry critters, it is not the only! Termites are not fussy eaters and unless timber or any timber by-product is treated with a Termicide, they can eat it.

Other common food sources include- paper, woodchips, cardboard, mulch, Masonite, dead plant material etc. Just to name a few.

#### **Moisture/Water**

Moist soil attracts termites, ensure drainage pipes from hot water systems, air conditioners, leaking taps etc are not dripping into the soil, fix all leaking pipes or water damage around the house promptly.

Ensure venting to the sub floor is not blocked. The venting allows air flow to keep the area dry and be less attractive to termites.

### **Safe Harborage**

Finally, Termites need a safe harborage to live. Unfortunately, like us, Termites often think our homes are perfect locations to hang their hat at night. Unless of course, you have the appropriate security/protective systems to divert them elsewhere. Inspect and seal any cracks and holes outside your home. Make sure vents are screened and gaps around windows and doors are sealed.

Above all else, keep your home as finely maintained as possible. Make sure that the paint on the exterior surfaces is kept in good condition. Keep vents screened to keep out the flying pests.

Stopping termites before they can become established in your home is the best termite protection method. There are three main forms of termite control; protective barrier control, chemical soil termite treatment and termite baiting systems.

If you are worried about termites in your home the best solution is to have a year round termite control and protection program from a professional termite controller.

### **Health Risk**

Termites and Possible Health Issues. Termites may bite and sting, but these wounds are not toxic. Termites are not known to carry diseases harmful to humans, either. However, people who are living in homes infested by termites may suffer from allergic reactions or even asthma attacks.



Termite Queen and King



Termite workers



Termite soldier



Alates