

SERVICE TECHNICIAN

Serving The Urban Applicator Professional

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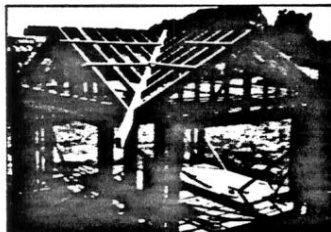
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Analyzing The Value Of Alternative Termite Treatments

Developing environmentally-friendlier termite treatment methods has long been a goal of pest control industry researchers, manufacturers and technicians. The three groups have worked through the years in both the laboratory and in the field to develop new ideas to meet customer demands for safer, more effective termite treatment methods.

In that time, a number of alternative termite treatment methods have been introduced to the industry, some with promising results, others with little or no value. At the Pest Control Operators of California (PCOC) Annual Convention earlier this year, several noted termite researchers presented detailed information on studies conducted with al-



The "termite villa" used to test the effectiveness of several alternative termite control methods.

ternative treatment methods.

The initial findings of the two-phase study on drywood termite control methods indicated that some non-chemical treatments may not be as effective as chemical treatments and may even cause structural damage. While this information might be viewed as disappointing by some, it demonstrates the importance of developing viable alternative treatment methods.

"This is the first time the effectiveness of non-chemical termite treatments has been studied," said Dr. Vernard Lewis, a researcher from the

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INDUSTRY UPDATE

Sell, Sell, Sell...

Are technicians required to sell pest control services?

58.1%

YES

41.9%

NO

CONTRACT

(Source: PCT Magazine Study)

Today, securing customers is a real challenge for pest control companies. As a result, the role of the technician is changing from service-only to sales and service. There are a number of factors contributing to this change in attitude — dual roles in smaller sized companies, customer preference for the same person for service and sales and the opportunity for quicker advancement and financial rewards.

No matter the reason, a majority of pest control companies are having technicians sell pest control services in addition to providing pest management services. According to a *Pest Control Technology* magazine survey, 58 percent of the companies responding to the

survey require technicians to sell pest control services, while 42 percent opted to divide sales and service duties between personnel.

What does this tell technicians? Well, for one thing it indicates the direction in which the industry is headed in terms of the service technician's role and it sends a clear message that technicians will be asked to carry more of the load for making their company's sales efforts more successful.

For an in-depth look at the topic of service technicians and sales, turn to page 44 and read about both sides of the issue in *Service Technician's* exclusive report, "Technicians And Sales: A Profitable Combination."

Termite Bait Receives EPA Registration

DowElanco has received federal registration from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for hexaflumuron, an insect growth regulator (IGR), for use against one of the industry's most destructive pests — subterranean termites. This new technology has been developed for use in DowElanco's Sentricon System, the company's latest termite colony elimination technology.

The company indicated that federal registration for the prod-

uct came sooner than initially anticipated and that it would immediately start the process of gaining registration and use approval of the product at the state level.

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The Sentricon System could revolutionize termite control.

FIELD REPORT

A Practical 'Hands-On' Guide To
Controlling Pests In A Variety Of Accounts



With baits, ants and cockroaches find the nest or harborage for you. The bait toxicant is slow-acting so that all the members of an ant colony or cockroach aggregation are eventually poisoned.

Answering Your Bait Application Questions

By John Klotz & Nader Aslani

When an entire pest control company consists of just one or a handful of employees, as is often the case in this industry, finding and utilizing the most efficient pest control treatment methods is vital. It's not cost-effective for technicians to make repeated return trips to an account. Effective treatment decisions and proper application the first time are crucial to keeping costs down.

In this article we hope to assist you in the most effective ways of using baits for ant and cockroach control. We will describe how Nader Aslani, sole proprietor and "one man show" of Marion Pest Control, Ocala, Fla., avoids frequent callbacks through proper application methods, which is the key to every successful baiting program. The application methods used by Aslani are good examples that

technicians can incorporate into their ant treatment programs. As most pest control companies shift to bi-monthly or even annual service, control measures must be longer-term. Baits, which can last three to four months, are ideal for this purpose. In addition to their longer active life, baits have several other advantages over residual sprays. Baits can be used:

- In areas where sprays are restricted.
- More safely around electrical equipment.
- On furniture, thus avoiding staining.
- In sensitive areas like

commercial kitchens and food preparation areas.

The bait station is "tamper resistant," easy to remove and less expensive than sprays in the long run, even if up-front costs are greater. Unfortunately, one major disadvantage of baits is that they take longer than sprays to gain control of the pest. However, we believe this problem can be solved by educating the customer on how baits work and explaining the length of time required for them to take effect.

Successful baiting requires an understanding of the pest's basic biology and behavior. Both ants and cockroaches live in social groups, where mutual grooming and feeding occurs among nestmates. Trophallaxis between ants of the same colony is the sharing of regurgitated liquid food, so that one ant's meal eventually spreads throughout the entire colony. This peculiar behavior is what is meant by ants having a "social stomach."

On the other hand, cockroaches are coprophagic, also a type of food sharing, but this time it's fecal material. This food sharing is facilitated by living in close-knit colonies, as with ants, and for roaches by aggregations in harborage. Preferably, baits should be placed as close as possible to the colony or harborage to maximize the chances of the insect encountering the bait. With ants this means placement along a trail, and with roaches placement in the harborage or as close to it

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Don't Play With Fire...Ants That Is

In most instances ants aren't considered dangerous insects, but if technicians are dealing with the fire ant they'd better think again. Fire ants are common pests in several southern states and their stings cause an intense burning sensation and blistering. Numerous stings can be fatal to elderly people, small children and pets.

To help technicians with fire ant identification, *Service Technician*, with the help of Orkin Pest Control, has provided the following fire ant facts:

- Fire ants are 1/8 to 1/4 inch long and reddish-brown to black in color.
- Fire ants live in mounds that can be 12

to 18 inches high and 12 to 36 inches deep.

- A fire ant colony can have more than one queen, meaning thousands of offspring can be produced every day.

- A fire ant queen can produce 200 offspring every day.
- There are as many as 500,000 workers per mound and it is common to have 20 to 30 mature colonies per acre.
- Fire ants are attracted to electrical equipment such as air conditioners, junction boxes and underground wiring and can short them out.
- Fire ants will eat almost any type of animal or plant material and travel 100 feet from the mound looking for food.



Fire ants are typically found in the South.

Information for this article courtesy of Orkin Pest Control.



Bait Application Questions

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as possible. However, sometimes this is easier said than done since more often than not we are unaware of the exact location of the trail or the harborage site.

Careful inspections are the key to determining where to place baits. The number of baits used depends on the extent of infestation. An inspection should begin in those areas where the customer has seen pest activity. Question the customer carefully. Often, they know exactly where the ants are trailing or where the cockroaches are hiding.

Look for signs of infestation like frass (wood fragments), which in the

case of carpenter ants indicates a nest is nearby, and fecal droppings, which indicate a harborage for cockroaches. Technicians should flush with a pyrethrum aerosol into cracks, crevices

and void spaces, under refrigerators, around oven ranges or soft drink machines for cockroaches. Use sticky traps placed along edges or in corners to monitor for cockroaches, since

roaches, like ants, travel along these structural guidelines when going to and from their harborage or nest. Sanitation is the single most important factor in successful baiting pro-

gram. A customer with poor sanitary habits will reduce the effectiveness of control because the baits must compete with other food items for acceptance. Here, it's important to educate the customer as to the importance of cleanliness. And, of course, successful re-establishment of a pest population may be avoided in some cases if the customer maintains a strict sanitation regime.

So minimize your callbacks, and thereby reduce application expenses and valuable time by performing careful inspections and ensuring proper placement of baits. And remember, to a small as well as a large company, time is money!

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John Klotz is a research entomologist with the USDA Agricultural Research Service, Medical and Veterinary Entomology Laboratory, Gainesville, Fla. Nader Aslani is owner of Marion Pest Control, Ocala, Fla.

Poor sanitary habits in an account will reduce the effectiveness of baits.

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the customer as to the importance of cleanliness. And, of course, successful re-establishment of a pest population may be avoided in some cases if the customer maintains a strict sanitation regime.

Key Ant Inspection Tips For Technicians

■ The key to eliminating any ant infestation is to locate all of the ant colonies in or around the property and treat them. The inspection is the most important step in dealing with pest ant infestations. Time must be

taken to perform a proper inspection and locate all areas where ants are active. The following chart discusses several tips that may prove useful to technicians attempting to locate colonies of ants in and around structures.

INTERIOR

■ **Carpeted Rooms.** In carpeted rooms, many ants like to forage along the walls under the edge of the carpet. When ants have been sighted in a carpeted room, the edge of the carpet can be pulled up using a pair of needle nose pliers so foraging ants can be seen. Start with the walls facing the exterior of the room. Only pull up the carpet enough so the area under it can be inspected. Do not pull up large areas of the carpet along a wall! It may be difficult to properly replace.

If ants are found foraging under a carpet, pull up the edges in other areas to determine how far the ants are foraging. Many times, these foraging workers will lead to the point where the ants are entering from outside the structure, from inside a wall void or through a crack in the slab.

The following tip can be helpful when attempting to follow foraging ant workers back to the colony. Look for workers carrying bits of food or whose abdomens are swollen with liquid food. These are the ants which are returning to the colony. Follow the trail in the direction these ants are heading. Following foraging ants back to the colony takes time, but this extra time is necessary to eliminate costly callbacks for additional service because all ant colonies have not been found.

■ **Uncarpeted Rooms.** In rooms with no carpet, ants will usually forage along the baseboards along the wall. Some baseboards do not completely sit on the floor which creates a small crack between the floor and the bottom of the baseboard and ants will sometimes trail under the baseboard. When inspecting, use a knife or another flat object and slowly move it under the baseboard. This will bring foraging ants, if they are present, into the open where they can be seen.

■ **Other Interior Areas.** Fire ants and pavement ants often build mounds inside the bath traps under bath tubs in slab homes. When inspecting for Pharaoh ants, remove wall outlet switch plates and check for dead or live ants. Window sills should also be inspected for foraging ants entering from the outside and feeding on dead insects.

EXTERIOR

■ **Foundations.** When inspecting outside along building foundations, look for loose soil built into a typical ant mound. Use a screwdriver or knife to dig in soil to determine if live ants are present. Turn over rocks, pieces of wood, landscape timbers and other items next to and away from the structure to check for ant colonies. Ants such as pavement,

Argentine, fire and crazy ants all infest structures from colonies located away from the structure.

■ **Leaf Litter And Mulch.** If leaf litter or mulch is present next to the foundation, rake it back away from the foundation to look for ant colonies. Many times ants will nest in mulch without building visible mounds. This is especially true with fire and pavement ants. In areas where fire ants occur, use a small hand-held garden rake to pull back mulch or leaf litter can result in stings if a fire ant colony is present.

■ **Other Outside Areas.** Pull grass away from the foundation and along driveways, patios and sidewalks to check for foraging ants. Many times pavement, Argentine, fire and ghost ant workers will forage along these areas but not in the open where they are easily seen. Foraging ants can then be traced back to the colony's location. Check inside water line meter boxes and under sprinkler heads for ant colonies.

Look for ants trailing up the sides of the structure and along eaves and soffits. Argentine and crazy ants are often found in these areas. Check the branches of shrubs and trees which brush up against the side of a structure for foraging ants which might be trailing from the branches onto the structure. Many species of ants, especially carpenter and ghost ants, use this route to enter structures.

Studies and practical experience have shown that ants typically follow the corners and edges of objects. The edge of a sidewalk is where you are more likely to find a trail of ant workers than in the middle of the sidewalk. Keep this in mind when searching for ant trails in and around an account. Inspect wooden porch columns for carpenter ant activity and be aware that other ants will also nest inside these columns.



In carpeted rooms, technicians should be aware that ants frequently like to forage along walls and fireplaces, and under the edges of carpets. (Photo: Stoy Hedges)