



Middleton Pest Control designs new treatment for drywood termites. By Darlene Taylor

Location, Location, Location

PCOs and real estate agents can both claim the mantra of “location, location, location” as a slogan for their businesses. Prime real estate affords greater opportunity and reward because of its physical position. PCOs who can locate pests and galleries and treat them accordingly exhibit a greater professionalism and provide greater customer satisfaction.

A comparison of frass size of the powderpost drywood termite (*Cryptotermes brevis*, top) and the southeastern drywood (bottom). Photo: Matt Messenger



DRYWOOD TERMITES. These pests, found primarily in warmer, coastal locations such as Florida, California, Hawaii and Texas, do not need an above-ground moisture source. This means they live entirely in wood; in buildings they may infest structural timbers, furniture, wooden sills and even wooden picture frames. Damage from termites is almost never covered by homeowners' insurance, and annual costs

related to drywood termite control reach into hundreds of millions of dollars.

Two accepted procedures for dealing with these termites are whole-structure treatment and spot treatment. As the name implies, whole-structure entails placing a tent over the entire building and fumigating it. Drawbacks associated with this treatment are the physical vacancy of the occupants for at least 24 hours, and possible damage to the build-

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Top two photos: Using the AED-2000 to listen for termite activity. Bottom photo: Treating the drywood termite gallery with a foam termiticide. (Photos: Doc Nichols).

ing itself and its contents. In many cases, only extreme infestations would warrant a whole-structure treatment.

Spot treatments can be handled by electrocution or a "drill and treat" method. The high-voltage electrical current is limited in its wood penetration ability. However, drill and treat offers a more effective treatment option. Once galleries are located, a termiticide is injected into them. Often, though, galleries cannot be located with a high degree of accuracy.

"The drill and treat method for drywood termite control has been around for quite a long time, but was not an effective control procedure," said Philip "Doc" Nichols, entomologist and technical director of Middleton Pest Control, headquartered in

Orlando, Fla. "In 2002, Middleton president Greg Clendenin approached me and said he wanted the company to get into the drywood termite market with a non-fumigation treatment," Nichols said.

RESEARCH. Clendenin wanted a creative approach to implement in Florida, a state heavily hit by drywood termites. Nichols used the drill and treat method as a base, and started testing equipment not normally associated with pest management. Since location was the key — locating the termites by locating the galleries — Nichols researched acoustic emission detectors. This equipment acts like a microphone, allowing a pest man-

Middleton found the AED-2000 from Acoustic Emission Consulting Inc. This instrument, along with a probe set and accessories, allows a trained technician to hear active feeding, head banging by soldier termites or swarming activity. In addition, this method does not destroy the wood or alarm the termites, because it is non-invasive. A technician's time for a service call may be shortened since locating the termites is easier. In addition, the AED-2000 can be used to verify the elimination of termite colonies after termiticide application.

The lumber industry provides the technology for the second step in the proce-



Western drywood termites (*Incisitermes minor*). Photo: Mark Messenger

"This new approach has been very successful for us in the first full year we have offered it. Middleton's drywood program generated \$500,000 in new revenue for the company in 2003."

— Phillip "Doc" Nichols, Middleton Pest Control

agement professional to listen for insect activity. "With this piece of equipment, we can pick up termites 6 to 8 feet away in a piece of wood," Nichols says.

dure. A Resistograph, basically a modified hand drill, can precisely locate termite galleries. The holes drilled are small, since the drill bit is about the size of a sewing needle,

and the holes can be easily patched. Customers appreciate the minimal intrusion.

Nichols explains that the Resistograph's drill bit is inserted into the wood, and resistance is measured, producing a graph. If a gallery is encountered, little or no resistance is displayed on the graph in the form of a flat line. Middleton has found the Resistograph to be 99 percent accurate.

Application of a non-repellent termiticide (in this case, Termidor) with the Pro-foamer unit is the final step. This offers

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THE DRYWOOD TERMITE ZONE



Source: Middleton Pest Control

residual control. In addition, the Pro-foamer unit utilizes the same holes drilled by the Resistograph, guided by the graph of the location of the galleries.

Middleton launched this treatment method in the spring of 2003. Six of the company's 22 termite technicians completed six weeks of training and then were evaluated. Additional field training was provided, if necessary. Nichols says he feels this is a systems approach and that it offers pest control companies who don't provide fumigation services an entrance into the termite market.

Nichols sums up the success of the challenge given him: "This new approach has been very successful for us in the first full year we have offered it. Middleton's drywood program generated \$500,000 in new revenue for the company in 2003. We charge by the size of the area we're treating," he said. Middleton stands behind its service, offering a 10-year guarantee. 🐜

Editor's note: PCT would like to thank Matthew T. Messenger for his drywood termite images. Messenger was formerly with the city of New Orleans Mosquito and Termite Control Board.

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SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

Middleton Pest Control was contacted by a business that sells and ships leather motorcycle seats for inspection/treatment. During an inspection, drywood termites were found in the second floor ceiling of the 1.4 million cubic foot building. The owners estimated the business would lose \$5,000 if forced to close for two days for fumigation. Middleton offered an alternative.

Using a scissor hoist (because the ceiling was 20 feet high), technicians found 22 areas with drywood termite activity. This was the first large-treatment site where Middleton used the AED-2000 to detect insect activity. The technicians further pinpointed the location of the galleries with the Resistograph. Termidor was then applied.

The entire process was completed in two days during normal business hours, with no disruption for the company. The owners saved \$1,200 by using Middleton's treatment over fumigation, the company says.