

# The dirt on subterranean termites

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For Florida homeowners, hurricanes are not the only threat to homes this season, as heavy summer rainfall also increases the risk of termite infestations, according to pest control experts at Arrow Environmental Services.

Florida homeowners spend an estimated \$500 million annually on costs related to termite damage and control, said Dr. Phil Koehler, professor of entomology at the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. "However, no insurance company in the U.S. provides insurance coverage for damage caused by termites, making these costs even more burdensome for homeowners."

Particularly troublesome during the summer months are subterranean termites, which tunnel from moist underground places and attack homes from the ground up. During these months, increased heat and rainfall cause more rapid breeding and, as a result, can lead to more extensive damage to homes.

"Termites can devour pounds of wood in a home in a year, and the risk is particularly high in states like Florida where weather conditions are extreme," said William Hurd,

president of Arrow Environmental Services, a provider of pest control, termite control and lawn care maintenance services. "However, treating termites at the earliest sign of a problem could save a homeowner thousands of dollars."

Depending on the type of termite and the size of the colony, everything from a small piece of wood to the entire frame of a house could be damaged. To ensure that termites are found before damage is extensive, homeowners should have an inspection done once a year by a pest control company that specializes in termite control.

"Homeowners may think to call a professional if they're fortunate enough to notice wood damage or swarming," said Hurd. "But often, evidence of a termite infestation is not apparent to the untrained eye."

During an annual visit, a termite professional will look for all warning signs of termites, including wings that have been shed or termite pellets.

The most common treatment for a subterranean termite infestation involves digging a trench approximately 1 foot deep and 1 foot wide around the perimeter of a home, including sidewalks, decks and garages. The trench



Photos courtesy of Arrow Environmental Services

**Subterranean termites create tubes or tunnels to enter a house, allowing them to attack a home from the ground up.**



**Dropped termite wings can be a sign of an infestation.**

the exterior of a home.

Tenting and fumigating a home is typically used to treat infestations of drywood termites, which are found in the wooden structures of a house.

To help prevent subterranean termite infestation, homeowners should eliminate moisture and remove termite food sources in and around a home. This can be as simple as repairing leaky faucets, water pipes and air-conditioning units; removing excess plant cover and mulch; and keeping firewood, lumber or paper away from the home's foundation or crawl space.

is then flooded with a termiticide that will exterminate live termites and prevent infestations in Florida homes for 5 to 7 years.

Another treatment option involves the installation of baiting systems every 10 feet around