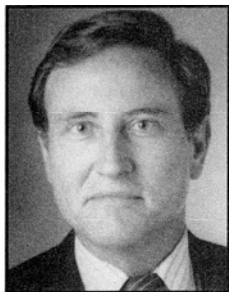


# Termite

## Know Your Texas Termites



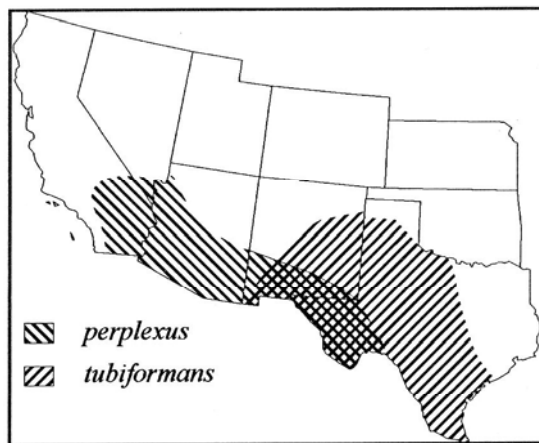
**Dr. Tom Atkinson**

Dr. Tom Atkinson lives in Austin and is a field research biologist for Dow AgroSciences specializing in urban pests in Texas and adjacent states.

**D**esert or Agricultural Termites: Grass and surface-feeding desert termites (*Gnathamitermes* species)

Most PCO's who work in central, southern or western Texas are familiar with so-called "desert subs" or "agricultural termites". What most don't realize is that these terms are applied to at least 7 species in 4 genera in Texas, all of the tropical family Termitidae. These groups differ in their feeding habits, distributions, and potential for being structural or nuisance pests.

The most widely distributed are species of the genus *Gnathamitermes*. *G. tubiformans* is the predominant species in most of parts of Texas and New Mexico. *G. perplexus* is found in southern California, Arizona, southern New Mexico, and far west Texas. Although found in deserts, they can be abundant in urban areas, pastures, and open woodlands.



These have no specific common name, but I would propose "surface-feeding" or "grass termites" because of their feeding habits. The termites themselves are seldom seen, but their workings are well known. They build mud tunnels over dead grasses or weeds, often leaving only a mass of mud sheathing behind.



On exposed wood they completely cover the area where feeding occurs with a continuous sheet of mud, rather than mud tubes or tunnels. They only feed on the weathered, splintered surface, giving the appearance that the wood has been sandblasted over rounded areas. Apparently they are unable or indisposed to penetrate wood. They are particularly fond of paper and corrugated cardboard.



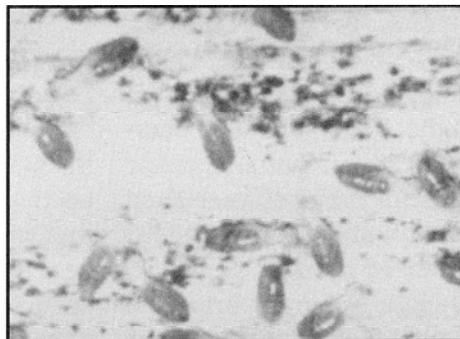
They are true subterranean termites, constructing underground foraging tunnels to exposed food sources. They probably have no potential as a pest in the sense of causing structural damage. They can be a nuisance to property owners, and occasionally forage into structures where they may feed on papers and exposed wood, and can also be found on exterior siding.

I can't imagine any circumstances where a PCO would be justified in selling a control job for these termites on the basis of structural damage (Let me know if you find such an instance!). On the other hand, as long as the property owner clearly understands that the damage is superficial and cosmetic, there is no reason that they couldn't be controlled by liquid barrier treatments in conjunction with correcting wood-to-ground contacts and other conducive conditions just like with any other subterranean termite. In this case control is for a nuisance pest (such as pillbugs, crickets, ants, or cockroaches) which also happens to be a termite.

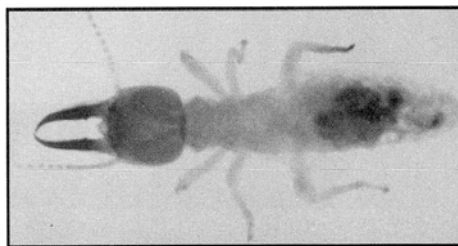
**Surface-feeding termites:  
Up close and personal**

Workers are about half again as large as a worker of native subterranean termites (*Reticulitermes* species). They have a noticeably plump ab-

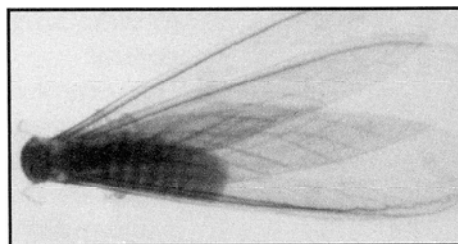
domen. Gut contents are usually black or gray (regardless of what they are eating). With practice they are easily recognizable. Some workers have yellowish, reinforced head capsules which some confuse with soldiers.



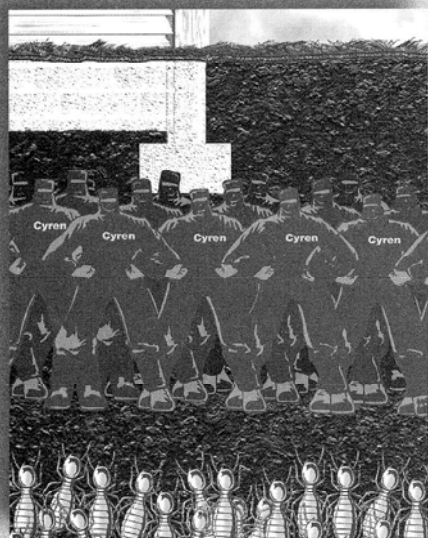
Soldiers are seldom seen and seem to represent a lower proportion of the total population than is the case for major pest species. The soldiers have very long mandibles and round heads. The 2 species differ in small details of the mandibles.



Alates are about twice the size of those of *Reticulitermes flavipes*. The wings are very long and black. The abdomen usually looks striped on living adults (black or dark brown and white). Alates normally swarm in mid to late summer during daylight hours. Large swarms are sometimes seen after or during summer rains.



**BUILD A BETTER BARRIER...**



**Cyren™**  
SPECIALTY INSECTICIDES & TERMITICIDE



**Cyren™ TC...** at 0.75% to 1.0% dilution delivers more of a non-repellent active ingredient to the treatment area, increasing the kill of foraging termites, reducing the potential for gaps in the barrier and providing greater protection against infestation due to soil disruption.

**Cyren™ 2E and 4E...** for long-lasting, effective control of ants and other household, turf and ornamental pests.

**Cyren™ 1/2G...** for control of deer ticks, fleas, fire ants and other outdoor pests.

For further information contact your local distributor or call 1-800-548-6113.

**CHEMINOVA**

Cheminova Inc.  
1700 Route 23, Suite 210  
Wayne, New Jersey 07470

Cyren™ is a trademark of Cheminova Agro.