

5 Tips To Keep Termites Out Of Your Home

Termites cause more damage to Australian homes every year than fire, flood and storms combined. In just 5 years, over 650,000 homes were infested by termites with a total damage bill estimated at \$3.9 billion!*

Like all living things, termites need moisture, food and warmth to live. By understanding termites and the conditions that attract them, you can implement a few simple measures to ensure your home does not become a statistic.



1. Remove termite 'food'

It's not unusual to see goods packed in cardboard boxes stored under the house directly on the ground. Even worse, firewood stacked next to the house! These are irresistible dinner invitations to termites!

Termites will eat any product that contains *cellulose*, a sugar found in the cells of natural plant fibres including wood, cotton and silk, and consequently their byproducts. Common termite food sources around the home include all building, decorative and landscaping timbers, dead trees and stumps, garden mulch, cardboard boxes, carpet grip edge and even wallpaper. Other commonly attacked items include firewood, stored and waste timbers, formwork timbers and furniture.

Make sure that any potential food sources around the house are removed, stored off the ground or replaced with alternative materials.

Remember, if it contains cellulose, it's termite food!

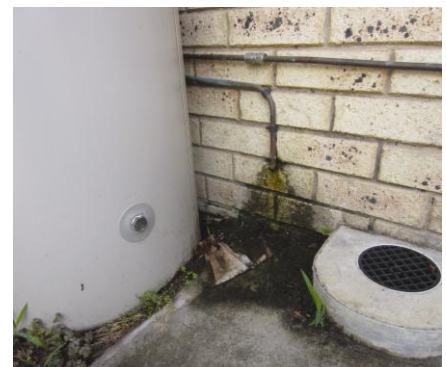


This is a termite banquet!

2. Reduce moisture sources

Termites need moisture to maintain high humidity levels in their workings and are therefore attracted to areas where water can be easily found. Leaking pipes and gutters, inappropriately placed or inadequate drainage and irrigation are common sources of moisture and should be fixed as soon as they are noticed.

Another common source of moisture, and where we often find termites entering a home, is the constant drip from hot water and air conditioning overflows next to the house. Ensure that the overflow of hot water systems and air conditioning units are always be drained away from the building.



*Source: Archicentre, the building advisory branch of the Royal Institute of Architects (referenced Creffield, 2005)

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3. Reduce soil levels around the home

Soil levels around the perimeter of homes on concrete slabs are often built up to the point that physical termite barriers that have been installed during construction are rendered inoperative. This is because the high soil level allows termites to bypass the barrier and enter the home undetected which can result in large amounts of damage being done before any sign of termites is noticed.

Gardens built directly next to the house are a common entry point for termites. When the soil level is high enough to cover the weep holes, this gives termites free, concealed access into the building.

Wherever possible, ensure weep holes and concrete slab edges are fully exposed.

4. Improve ventilation under the home

Poor ventilation under homes is a common cause of termite attack. Under normal conditions subfloor ventilation allows air to flow through the area under the house so that any excess moisture that may have been caused by heavy rain, water leaks or other situations, can be dried out quickly. If the area is not adequately ventilated, moisture can build up and attract termites.

Terracotta vents used in older homes are smaller than their more modern counterparts and may not provide adequate ventilation. Where this is the case, ventilation can be improved by installing additional vents or specially designed fans that will extract large volumes of air quickly and over a long period of time. At all times, ensure that vents are never blocked by soil or gardens.

If you are unsure about the effectiveness of the ventilation under your home, consult a builder, pest inspector or other appropriately qualified tradesman to assess your particular situation.



5. Implement a termite management programme

When it comes to managing the risk to your home by termites, there is no substitute for regular professional termite inspections by a competent timber pest inspector. Pest inspectors have the training and experience to know what to look for and where. They will identify any conducive (attractive) conditions and make recommendations on what you can do yourself to reduce the risk of termite attack. The Australian Standard that deals with timber pest inspections recommends that an inspection be carried out at least on an annual basis and more frequently in high risk areas.

In addition to regular inspections, consider installing a preventative termite management system. There are many on the market and some that can even be maintained by the homeowner. Consult your pest management professional or visit our website for more information on the types of systems available.

Have a termite management system in place already?

Good for you! Just remember that any changes around the exterior of the home such as renovations, additions or landscaping projects may interfere with the system. Always consult your pest management professional before you undertake any of this type of work.

Got a question or need more information?

Call us on **1800 111 616** or visit www.pestec.com.au.

