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# Formosan subterranean termite

Biosecurity



The Formosan subterranean termite is one of the most destructive termite species in the world. It can be found in China, Taiwan, Japan, South Africa, Sri Lanka and the USA (including Hawaii). Australia is free from the Formosan subterranean termite and we want to keep it that way.

## What the Formosan subterranean termite looks like

The Formosan termite lives in a colony that contains distinctive groups called 'castes'. These castes look different from one another and each has a special duty to carry out in the colony.

A termite worker is pale yellow in colour and builds nests from material that resembles paper. The material is actually made from soil, timber and other plant material, which is mixed together with its saliva and faeces.

A termite soldier is approximately 12 to 15 millimetres long, is pale yellow and has large dark 'teeth'. When disturbed, it exudes drops of milky fluid from its head.

An alate termite has wings, is yellowish-brown and is produced between early spring and midsummer, swarming in large numbers at dusk.

## What to look for

Nests are made in soil, wood, hollows or spaces between walls and floors. They can be found in shipping containers, timber and yachts/boats. The termites are attracted to lights and are often found around windows, light fixtures, windowsills and in spider webs.

## The risk to Australia

The Formosan subterranean termite forms large colonies and is highly destructive, causing major structural damage to timber and timber components in housing and furniture in a relatively short time. The termite has the potential to devastate Australia's forests and native bush as well as have a major impact on our timber-based industries.



1.



2.



3.

#### Images

1. Termites soldiers.
2. Damage to wooden floors caused by termites.
3. A colony of termites.

**Note:** Images are not to size.

## What to do if you find any suspect termites

### SEE. SECURE. REPORT.

If you see anything suspicious such as flying insects, frass, holes or tunnels in timber, secure the goods where possible and immediately report it to the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources on 1800 798 636.

For safety consult a Department of Agriculture and Water Resources entomologist before handling specimens.



Contact  
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources  
1800 798 636 (free call in Australia)



For more information  
[agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/report](https://agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/report)