

Termites & Carpenter Ants

It is common to confused termites with carpenter ants. Both are similar appearance, both nest in the spring, and both seem to enjoy nesting in wood. While similar in appearance, they differ in the damage they do to homes. Termites are an extremely costly structural insect pest in Connecticut.



Termites, while similar in appearance to the carpenter ant, are actually more closely related to the cockroach.

Termites

Termites have digestive enzymes, protozoa, and bacteria that allow them to digest cellulose, the main component in wood. While a single termite can only digest a small amount of wood, the size of the swarm, in addition to the long periods of time homeowners can go without noticing an infestation makes the damage from termites astronomical. The rate a termite consumes wood also depends on the species and the climate.

Termites may be identified by several factors. Their wings are equal in shape and size and are silvery/opaque in color. The width of a termite's body is the same throughout, with no curves. Their antennae are straight or slightly curved, but not bent.

How to identify a termite infestation (subterranean termite)

- The presence of mud-like material that lines walls in an irregular pattern.
- The presence of swarmer's in or around the household.
- The presence of thin "mud tubes" that connects the termite nest to wood. Not all infestations with have mud tubes, but if present, they are a very good indication.
- Piles of wings shed indicating that the nest is overcrowded, and some adults are swarming to establish a new nest site.
- Buckling paint or small holes on the wood surface.
- Damaged wood. Often, a hollow sound may be heard from wood structures if knocked on.

It is recommended that a professional pest inspector is hired to properly diagnose a termite problem. Eliminating wood-soil contact and controlling moisture problems are good preventative measures to take against termites entering the home.



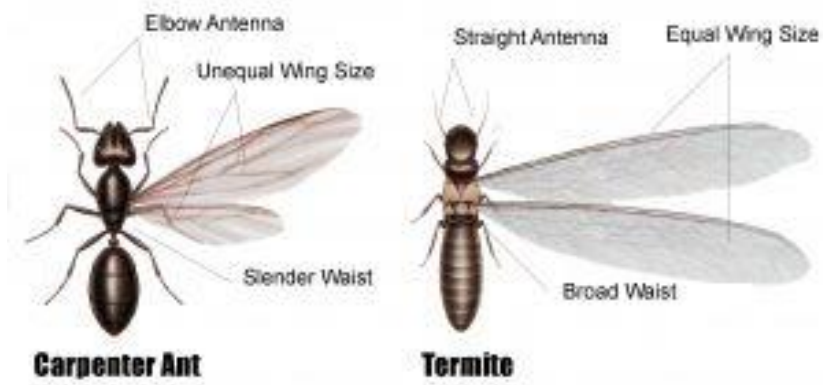
Termite mud tubes

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Carpenter Ants

Carpenter ants gain no nutritional value from eating wood but destroy it to form nests. Carpenter ant infestations are far less costly and much easier to control than termites. Carpenter ants enjoy nesting in moist wood as well. If only a few ants are seen indoors, it is possible that there is no infestation, and they are simply foragers from outside. Carpenter ants do less damage than termites but are indeed capable of doing damage to homes if the problem is left untreated. A sign of an infestation is the presence of winged ants that emerge from the ceilings, walls, or other crevices. If an infestation is severe, wood shavings may be found in piles near nesting areas.

The wings are different in shape and size from termites, one set of wings is typically larger than the other. The wings are nearly transparent and Carpenter ant bodies are curvy or pinched at the waist. Their antennae are bent, not straight.



TIP: Don't store firewood against the house. Often Carpenter ants build their nests in stored firewood.