

PESTS IN BUILDINGS

The most damaging environmental pests in the property industry are greedy humans like developers, builders and estate agents. Other pests... like termites... do much less damage

Even some designers, tradesmen, suppliers and home owners create environmental problems. Unfortunately human pests are hard to eradicate... instead I will try to enlighten you about TERMITES and their secretive ways

TERMITES

Permies may have more problems with termites than other folk due to the permaculture passion for gardening. Permies often use raised garden beds and deep mulch next to walls of buildings which can allow entry for subterranean termites. Trees, shrubs, neighbouring properties and bushland may also harbour termite nests. Damp soil attracts termites and their damage is often first found near bathrooms and other wet areas in homes



If you intend buying or building/extending a home you should be aware of the havoc termites can create and know how to manage their invasion with proper...

- preventative barriers
- regular inspections
- on-going maintenance

There are many different species of termites but only a few species of subterranean termites will attack buildings. However these little critters invade all kinds of houses and secretly damage more than just timber in buildings. 70% of homes in Adelaide will be attacked at some stage in their life

Built-in barriers which protect the whole house are highly desirable. Easy access for the inspection of termite activity is essential

Raised floor levels can deter subterranean termites. The concrete floor level of a house should be more than 100mm above any external paving. Timber floors need at least 400mm of clearance from the ground for underfloor inspections and ventilation.
Note: Do not use underfloor spaces for storing termite fodder (cellulose based materials)

Low toxicity termite barriers include the following...

- concrete floor slab
- stainless steel mesh
- layer of small crushed stones
- galvanised steel capping
- bait box monitoring

Each system of protection has its own special requirements and should be installed by a licensed expert. Approved chemical barriers (termiticides) have a limited life and may cause other problems

Termite resistant timbers are preferred for use in landscaping and garden areas

Annual termite inspections are needed in high risk areas like Adelaide. Cold climates, like in Tasmania, are less attractive to termites

Some household insurance policies may not cover termite damage... so check your policy OR run the risk of a huge damage bill

Commenting on pesky termites our Bill Mollison might say "You don't have a termite problem, but you do have a numbat deficiency". However once termites set up a colony in your house even numbats, echidnas and aardvards may be stumped to control them

OTHER PESTS such as mice, cockcroaches, silverfish, flies, fleas, mosquitos, wasps, possums, etc may be controlled in the home by...

- blocking their entry
- restricting their breeding habitats
- removing food and water sources
- adding bait stations
- using repellents such as certain herbs, natural oils, plants
- encouraging predators such as spiders, black ants, frogs, gecko lizards

Each kind of pest problem needs an individual approach by an experienced person. Some local Councils offer advice and assistance. A useful guide to pest control is J Tyrrell's book "Pest Pack" available from Choicebooks

JACK METCALF

Jack runs a small business as a building consultant specialising in affordable eco home and renovation design. He is a member of the East Suburban/Para Permies and several other environmental/building groups... refer to www.jmetcalf.net