

"Bug of the Month"

A common insect seen in the Pacific Northwest from spring through fall is the Pacific dampwood termite, *Zootermopsis angusticollis*. Usually their existence is made known during one of numerous swarming times with the winged adults can be seen flying around lights at night. Normally they do not pose a significant problem to wooden structures, but they can destroy wood that has very damp.

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE? The Pacific dampwood termite has three castes; reproductives (only winged form), workers and soldiers. The winged reproductives are light brown with two pairs of dark brown, leathery wings that can be up to one inch long. The workers are cream colored and 1/8 to 1/3 inch long. Soldiers have flattened brown or yellowish brown heads with elongated black or dark brown mandibles and are slightly larger than the workers.



WHAT DO THEY DO? The Pacific dampwood termites swarm in summer through fall. Most swarm in the evening and are attracted to light. At most, dampwood termites produce a few hundred swarmer compared to subterranean termites that produce thousands of swarmer. The



founder male and female create a sealed chamber in the wood and within two weeks produce approximately 12 eggs. The second batch of eggs is laid the following spring. The colonies gradually increase in size, some reaching as many as 4,000 individuals. Dampwood termites play an important role in recycling wood and plant material. Dampwood termites do not require soil-to-wood contact, but the wood they infest must have a very high moisture content. These termites infest almost any kind of wood and tolerate very high levels of moisture. They often are found in dock and wharf pilings, logs, stumps and dead trees.

As they excavate wood while feeding, dampwood termites litter the inside of their tunnels with their fecal pellets. Fecal pellets are oval with flat sides, about 1/32-inch long and the color of the infested wood. Dampwood termites usually enter structures in areas where there is wood soil contact and the wood is water damaged.

MANAGEMENT. Mechanical exclusion is the best method for controlling the Pacific dampwood termite.

- Infested structures should be inspected for wood-soil contact, area where there is a constant water supply as a plumbing leak, damaged wood, and fecal pellets.
- The most effective methods of controlling dampwood termites are eliminating the moisture from the wood and removing infested wood and replacing it with treated lumber.
- Wood remaining in place and galleries can be treated with residual insecticides such as disodium octaborate tetrahydrate that is particularly effective when the wood has high moisture content. **Be sure to read and follow all directions on the label exactly...**

MORE QUESTIONS? Please do not hesitate to give your "Bug Docs" a call at comm.: (360) 315-4450, DSN: 322-4450 or you can e-mail us at MEI@ndvecc.navy.mil.