

Swarming Termites



Prepared By
Gary K. Wilson
Area Agent
(Urban Entomologist)
Ouachita Parish
(318) 323-2251
gwilson@agcenter.lsu.edu

It is the policy of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, or disability.

Visit our website: www.lsuagcenter.com

Louisiana State University Agricultural Center

William B. Richardson, Chancellor

Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station

David Boethel, Vice Chancellor and Director

Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service

Paul D. Coreil, Vice Chancellor and Director

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. The Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.



Swarming Termites

It requires two to four years for a termite colony to mature. When the colony reaches a certain population level, winged reproductive “swarmers” or “alates,” are produced. Environmental factors such as heat, light and moisture trigger the emergence of swarmers. Native subterranean termites swarm during daylight, usually after a rain on warmer days from January to April.

Mixed groups of roughly equal numbers of males and females leave the nest at the same time. Large colonies may emit pulses of alates over a two to three day period as long as environmental conditions are favorable. Most swarming activity is outside, but occasionally swarms will emerge inside structures.

Swarmers are extremely weak fliers but may be carried great distances by the wind. They usually fly upward first and are often attracted to lights. After landing, each female breaks off her own wings, and emits a pheromone to attract males. If a suitable male finds her, he breaks off his wings and they search for a suitable food source in which to begin a nest.

A very small nest is developed before the pair mates. The first few eggs hatch into offspring that takeover the colony maintenance. Only one pair of active reproductives exists in a colony. The king and queen are sealed into a chamber where they are tended by workers. The queen can lay roughly 1,000 eggs per day by the time she is four years old. If either the king or queen dies, other members of the colony can change into reproductives and replace the lost member.

