Analyzing The Value Of Alternative Termite Treatments

Developing environmentally-friendlier termite treatment methods has long been a goal of pest control industry researchers, manufacturers and technicians. The three groups have worked through the years in both the laboratory and in the field to develop new ideas to meet customer demands for safer, more effective termite treatment methods.

In that time, a number of alternative termite treatment methods have been introduced to the industry, some with promising results, others with little or no value. At the Pest Control Operators of California (PCOC) Annual Convention earlier this year, several noted termite researchers presented detailed information on studies conducted with alternative treatment methods.

The initial findings of the two-phase study on drywood termite control methods indicated that some non-chemical treatments may not be as effective as chemical treatments and may even cause structural damage. While this information might be viewed as disappointing by some, it demonstrates the importance of developing viable alternative treatment methods.

"This is the first time the effectiveness of non-chemical termite treatments has been studied," said Dr. Vernard Lewis, a researcher from the.

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Termite Bait Receives EPA Registration

DowElanco has received federal registration from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for hexaflumuron, an insect growth regulator (IGR), for use against one of the industry's most destructive pests — subterranean termites. This new technology has been developed for use in DowElanco's Sentricon System, the company's latest termite colony elimination technology.

The company indicated that federal registration for the product came sooner than initially anticipated and that it would immediately start the process of gaining registration and use approval of the product at the state level.

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Answering Your Bait Application Questions

By John Klotz & Nader Aslani

In this article we hope to assist you in the most effective ways of using baits for ant and cockroach control. We will describe how Nader Aslani, sole proprietor and "one-man show" of Marion Pest Control, Ocala, Fla., avoids frequent callbacks through proper application methods, which is the key to every successful baiting program. The application methods used by Aslani are good examples that technicians can incorporate into their ant treatment programs.

As more pest control companies shift to bimonthly or even annual service, control measures must be longer-term. Baits, which can last three to four months, are ideal for this purpose. In addition to their longer active life, baits have several other advantages over residual sprays. Baits can be used:

- In areas where sprays are restricted.
- More safely around electrical equipment.
- On furniture, thus avoiding staining.
- In sensitive areas like commercial kitchens and food preparation areas.

The bait station is "tamper resistant," easy to remove and less expensive than sprays in the long run, even if up-front costs are greater. Unfortunately, one major disadvantage of baits is that they take longer than sprays to gain control of the pest. However, we believe this problem can be solved by educating the customer on how baits work and explaining the length of time required for them to take effect.

Successful baiting requires an understanding of the pest's basic biology and behavior. Both ants and cockroaches live in social groups, where mutual grooming and feeding occurs among nestmates. Trophallaxis between ants of the same colony is the sharing of regurgitated liquid food, so that one ant's meal eventually spreads throughout the entire colony. This peculiar behavior is what is meant by ants having a "social stomach."

On the other hand, cockroaches are coprophagous, also a type of food sharing, but this time it's fecal material. This food sharing is facilitated by living in close-knit colonies, with ants, and for cockroaches by aggregations in harbors. Preferably, baits should be placed as close as possible to the colony or harborage to maximize the chances of the insect encountering the bait. With ants this means placement along a trail, and with roaches placement in the harborage or as close to it (continued on page 42)
as possible. However, sometimes this is easier said than done since more often than not we are unaware of the exact location of the trail or the harborage site.

Careful inspections are the key to determining where to place baits. The number of baits used depends on the extent of infestation. An inspection should begin in those areas where the customer has seen pest activity. Question the customer carefully. Often, they know exactly where the ants are trailing or where the cockroaches are hiding.

Look for signs of infestation like frass (wood fragments), which in the case of carpenter ants indicates a nest is nearby, and fecal droppings, which indicate a harborage for cockroaches. Technicians should flush with a pyrethrum aerosol into cracks, crevices and void spaces, under refrigerators, around oven ranges or soft drink machines for cockroaches. Use sticky traps placed along edges or in corners to monitor for cockroaches, since they are often active.

Poor sanitary habits in an account will reduce the effectiveness of baits.

Grains. A customer with poor sanitary habits will reduce the effectiveness of control because the baits must compete with other food items for acceptance. Here, it’s important to educate the customer as to the importance of cleanliness. And, of course, successful re-establishment of a pest population may be avoided in some cases if the customer maintains a strict sanitation regime.

So minimize your callbacks, and thereby reduce application expenses and valuable time by performing careful inspections and ensuring proper placement of baits. And remember, to small as well as a large company, time is money!

John Klett is a research entomologist with the USDA Agricultural Research Service, Medical and Veterinary Entomology Laboratory, Gainesville, Fla. Nader Asilani is owner of Marion Pest Control, Ocala, Fla.

Key Ant Inspection Tips For Technicians:

**INTERIOR**

- **Carpeted Rooms.** In carpeted rooms, many ants like to forage along the walls under the edge of the carpet. When ants have been sighted in a carpeted room, the edge of the carpet can be pulled up using a pair of needle nose pliers so foraging ants can be seen. Start with the walls facing the exterior of the room. Only pull up the carpet enough so the area under it can be inspected. Do not pull up large areas of the carpet along a wall! It may be difficult to properly replace.

- **Uncarpeted Rooms.** In rooms with no carpet, ants will usually forage along the baseboards along the wall. Some baseboards do not completely sit on the floor which creates a small crack between the floor and the bottom of the baseboard and ants will sometimes trail under the baseboard. When inspecting, use a knife or another flat object and slowly move it under the baseboard. This will bring foraging ants, if they are present, into the open where they can be seen.

**EXTERIOR**

- **Foundations.** When inspecting outside along building foundations, look for loose soil built into a typical ant mound. Use a screwdriver or knife to dig in soil to determine if live ants are present. Turn over rocks, pieces of wood, landscape timbers and other items next to and away from the structure to check for ant colonies. Ants such as pavement, Argentine, fire and crazy ants all infest structures from colonies located away from the structure.

- **Other Outside Areas.** Pull grass away from the foundation and along driveways, patios and sidewalks to check for foraging ants. Many times pavement, Argentine, fire and ghost ant workers will forage along these areas but not in the open where they are easily seen. Foraging ants can then be traced back to the colony's location. Check inside water line meter boxes and under sprinkler heads for ant colonies.

- **Other Interior Areas.** Fire ants and pavement ants often build mounds inside the bath traps under bath tubs in slab homes. When inspecting for Pharaoh ants, remove wall outlet switch plates and check for dead or live ants. Window sills should also be inspected for foraging ants entering from the outside and feeding on dead insects.

In carpeted rooms, technicians should be aware that ants frequently like to forage along walls and fireplaces, and under the edges of carpets. (Photo: Stuy Hedges)