



Bug-Wise

No. 9
July 11, 2006

Office: 1-662-325-2085

Do-it-yourself Termite Control: The main thing to keep in mind about do-it-yourself termite control is, when it comes to your home--that multi-thousand dollar investment in which you live--don't try to do it yourself! Hire a licensed professional pest control company to protect your home from termites.

There are several good reasons for this. First the pest control company has access to more effective, longer lasting products than homeowners can buy. You need a commercial applicator's license to be able to buy most of these products. Second, it takes some pretty specialized equipment to properly treat a house for termites: high volume spray tanks, powerful drills with long masonry drill bits, and specialized, leak-proof applicators. Most homeowners simply don't have this type of equipment. Third, licensed termite technicians have the specialized knowledge needed to safely and effectively treat a house for termites.

This also goes for any additions that are attached to your home. Anytime you begin planning an addition, even if it is only one room, or a small deck, be sure to contact your pest control company before you begin work. Depending on the type of construction you are adding, it may be necessary to have the structure pre-treated at some point early in the building process, and/or it may need to be treated once the construction is finished. Most companies will treat such additions for a reasonable price, especially if you already have the house under contract with them. Don't neglect this detail. **Untreated additions are one of the main reasons for termite infestations.** Also, not getting an addition treated or treating the addition yourself will likely void any existing termite contract you have on your home.

But I just want to treat my doghouse, which already has termites, and that 8 by 10 foot storage shed I'm planning to build! Are there any products that I as a homeowner can use and how do I apply them? There are two main types of termiticides that homeowners can purchase and use to treat or protect small wooden structures and utility buildings, those containing permethrin and those containing disodium octaborate tetrahydrate, (DOT). Other non-restricted use termiticides containing active ingredients such as bifenthrin, cypermethrin, or fipronil are occasionally seen for sale locally or through internet stores, but they usually carry labeling that restricts their use to 'individuals or firms licensed or registered by the state to apply termiticide products'.

Permethrin products: Permethrin is a pyrethroid insecticide that can be used to control existing infestations of termites or as a preventive treatment. Under ideal conditions it can provide up to five years of residual control, though two to three years may be a more realistic expectation. There are quite a few permethrin products that list termites on the label, but only those containing at least 10% permethrin are really useful.

These are applied by digging a trench, 4 inches deep by 6 inches wide, around the slab of the structure, mixing the termiticide according to label directions, and applying to the trench at the rate of 4 gallons per 10 linear feet of trench. Apply approximately half of this volume to the bottom of the trench, then back fill the trench with soil and apply the remainder of the solution to the backfill. The objective is to establish a treated band of soil all the way around the structure and immediately adjacent to the edge of the slab. That's right; you treat the soil, not the wood. Eastern subterranean termites have to return to the soil regularly to obtain moisture. Be sure to read and follow the label carefully, treatment becomes more complicated if you are dealing with anything other than simple slab construction.

Many homeowners, especially those in rural area, have a 25-gallon sprayer with an electric pump, such as those sold for use on ATVs or a larger, tractor-mounted sprayer that can be used to mix and apply the treatment. Just

remove the spray nozzle so that the liquid is pumped out of the end of the hose under low pressure. Be sure to rinse the sprayer well before and after use. For small structures you may not even need a sprayer. It may be easier to mix-up 4 gallons at a time in a large watering can or other appropriate container, treat 10 feet of trench and then mix another batch. It will only take 4 ‘batches’ to treat that 8 by 10 foot shed. You can even use a 2-gallon container to mix in and treat 5 feet at a time. Just be sure to wear all appropriate safety equipment, including gloves, eye protection, and rubber boots.

DOT Products: Two commercial products containing DOT (disodium octaborate tetrahydrate) are available to homeowners. Unlike the permethrin products, these are applied to the wood, rather than the soil. It is usually not necessary to treat all the wood in the structure, just the lower two feet or so. This provides a barrier of treated wood that will prevent termites from becoming established. DOT can also be used to treat floor joists and the underside of wood sub-flooring for wood-infesting beetles in crawl spaces.

Bora-Care is a liquid product containing 40% DOT that can be purchased by the gallon from internet suppliers, and from the ‘home products store’ of some pest control companies. Termite Prufe is a soluble powder that is sold in 1-pound cans at farm supply and lawn and garden stores.

Wood that is properly treated with DOT is resistant to termites and other wood-destroying insects, as well as wood decay fungi (but not mildew). DOT provides long-term residual control when applied to dry, protected wood, but because it is water soluble, it is not recommended for wood that is in contact with the soil, is exposed to rain, or is otherwise exposed to moisture.

DOT products are best used to protect new construction. Wait until the studs and outside sheathing is installed, but before any inside wall coverings are installed. Then treat the lower two feet of the exposed studs, base plate, wall sheathing, and any other wood in contact with the slab according to label directions. The DOT will soak into the wood and, if applied correctly, will even reach those areas where two wood surfaces meet, and can’t be sprayed directly. Exterior wood surfaces can also be treated, provided they will be ultimately be covered with a waterproof material or finish. See product label for full details and special situations. DOT can also be used to control existing infestations as long as the wood is unfinished and accessible.

Apply DOT products by mixing according to label directions and then painting (using a brush or roller), or spraying (using a trigger pump sprayer or hand pump-type garden sprayer) onto dry, unfinished wood surfaces. One-gallon hand pump garden sprayers work well for larger projects, but be aware that DOT products have a tendency to clog. Make a second application after the first coat has soaked into the wood and dried. These treatments can also be used to treat or protect unfinished wood in existing structures. Read and follow label directions.

Termite treatments for use by homeowners *
(To treat small wooden structures not attached to the home)

Active ingredient (%)	Brand Name (example)
permethrin (38%)	Hi-Yield 38 Plus
permethrin (13.3%)	Surrender, Termite Killer II
permethrin (10%)	Hi-Yield Indoor/Outdoor Broad Use Insecticide38 Plus
disodium octaborate tetrahydrate (40%)	Bora-Care
disodium octaborate tetrahydrate (98%)	Termite Prufe

* These are examples of some of the more common termite treatments available to homeowners. Other similar treatments containing these active ingredients may also be effective. Read and follow all label directions.