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TERMITE TOWNS

I have always felt DeWitt, Wilber and Crete, the Blue River towns in Saline County, have had more than their fair share of termite issues. The lighter textured soil, old tree stumps and moisture all add to the issue of a good environment for the house destroying insects.

The old way to termite proof a home was companies enveloped the soil around a home with chlordane, a pesticide that was used since 1948. It was banned for use for termite control in 1988. The EPA had scientific evidence the chemical was a strong cancer causing agent. Studies have linked chlordane/heptachlor in human tissues with cancers of the breast, prostate, brain, and cancer of blood cells—leukemia and lymphoma.

All of this knowledge led to new development by chemical manufacturers to fill an empty niche. This effort resulted in the development of bait products. The advent of effective bait systems has given a new dimension to termite control that was lacking earlier. The general use bait systems sold to homeowners will not provide control but can be used as a sentinel system. Commercial applicators have access to more effective baits.

Another type of treatment is to treat structural wood directly with borates, which wicks into the wood to protect it from termite tunneling and feeding. As time has passed, termite control manufacturers have focused their efforts on finding lower-toxic products but still controlling termites. This search for safe and effective, novel treatments will continue. The bottom line is today's termite control professionals and homeowners have real choices about effective treatments they didn't have 20 years ago.

Get multiple bids, beware of lowball offers and ask if the applicator has attended UNL classes staying up-to-date beyond their commercial license. Don't let new homes catch you off guard. In Omaha, as Millard was heading west to Gretna, trees were cleared out to make way for new homes. A complaint became known from a brand new homeowner that had termite damage within 6 months. Can you imagine the frustration of paying a termite control company on a new home application and it failed?

The court proceedings and evidence presented indicated the out-of-town commercial applicator had diluted the chemical with water by such a margin, residual left around the home could not harm a flea. The company risked their reputation on a new home built in a termite infested area. If you see some winged black insects swarming inside or near your home, I can ID them for you if you bring samples to the Extension Office as winged termites are often confused with winged ants. After termites are discovered and treated it is recommended to keep up on termite inspections. Quarterly inspections can be done or at least annually. Homeowners should make sure that the contract includes a warranty or coverage if termites are found later down the road. Termite stations can be installed around perimeters to check every few months. Many homes that have termites can expect the neighbors and other homes in the area to be infested also.



Mulch next to your house, is not a good idea as it can be attractive to termites. UNL has several experts on termites in extension and research areas. A great resource website to learn more is at: <http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/termite.shtml>

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