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Simple Home Repairs—Exterior Termites/Search and Destroy

Your Problem

- Wood materials are threatened by termites.
- Wood materials have deteriorated.
- The house needs to be checked for the presence of termites.
- Preventive action against termites is required.

What You Need

- Flashlight
- Penknife or icepick
- Pick and shovel
- Chemical solution (consult an exterminator to determine the type of chemicals or treatment to use).

How-To: Checking for Termites

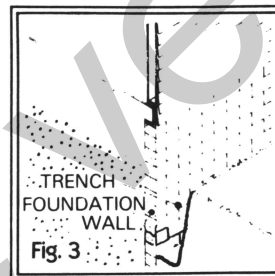
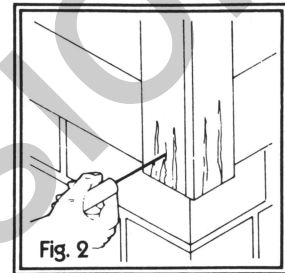
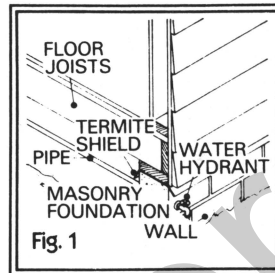
Wood decay and damage by insects are threats to the upkeep of the home.

The insects most destructive to wood in buildings are termites. There are two varieties: The "drywood" termite and the "subterranean" or "ground-nesting termite." Both thrive on wood for food.

"Drywood" termites can live without moisture, so that protection against them is very difficult. However, there are not many "drywood" termites in this country.

"Subterranean" or "ground-nesting" termites are a serious problem in the southern states. Subterranean termites live in colonies in the ground and require moisture to survive. The worker termites attack damp wood which is in contact with the ground. They may build earthen tunnels from the ground up to the wood. They will sometimes completely eat away the inside of a piece of wood while leaving the outside surface intact.

1. Check for termites at least twice a year.
2. During the spring and summer (termite mating season), call an exterminator to identify large numbers of flying insects that you cannot identify.
3. Look for earthen tunnels in the following locations:
 - Along masonry foundation and basement walls
 - Around openings where pipes enter walls
 - Along the surface of metal pipes (fig. 1).
4. Examine all cracks in slabs, and loose mortar in masonry walls. Check all joints where wood meets with concrete or masonry, at walls, slabs, piers, etc.



5. Inspect all wood and wood structures that are near the ground. Pay special attention to any that touch the house, such as fences, wood trellises, carports, etc. Examine crawl spaces that provide moist conditions.
6. Check windowsills, door thresholds, porches and the underside of stairs. Be on the lookout for peeling and blistering paint.
7. If you suspect that wood has termite damage, probe with a sharp point, such as an icepick or penknife (fig. 2). If the point penetrates the wood to a depth of 1/2 inch, when you use only hand pressure, it's a good indication of wood damage by termites.

How-To: Protecting Against Termites

Chemicals needed to control termites are toxic to animals and plant life. There is also danger of contaminating the water supply. The chemicals should be applied with extreme caution and preferably by an experienced person.

1. The following procedure should be followed when chemical treatments are necessary for an existing building:
 - (a) Dig a trench, approximately 1 foot wide and 3 feet deep, adjacent to the foundation wall (fig. 3).
 - (b) Prepare a solution of the insecticide. (Consult your

County Extension Office or local exterminator regarding the recommended type and mixing instructions.)

(c) Pour the insecticide against the exposed wall surface and into the trench as it is backfilled. The solution should be applied to all other locations where wood and masonry meet at a joint. It should also be applied to other areas that have earth floors.

(d) Use extreme caution with these chemicals since they will also be poisonous to humans and pets. If chemical is used inside the house, the room or space must be well ventilated and vacated for a period of time.

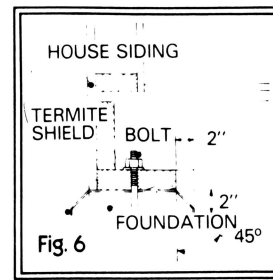
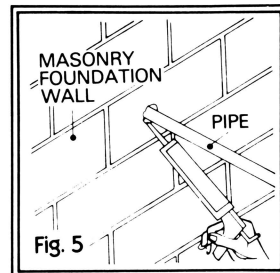
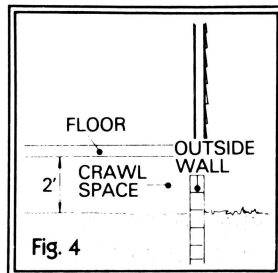
2. All surface water should be directed away from the building, allowing no water to accumulate at the foundations.

3. Cover the earth of unpaved basements with plastic film 4 mil or heavier.

4. Keep crawl spaces well ventilated. A house of 1,000 square feet should have at least 6 vents, 16 inches x 8 inches, open at all times. Crawl spaces should be at least 2 feet in height (fig. 4). Keep the space clear of wood scraps.

5. Untreated wood should not come closer than 6 inches to the ground.

6. Using caulking compound, seal all openings where pipes pass through foundation walls or other walls of the house (fig. 5). Also, seal any cracks or points of loose



mortar in masonry walls.

7. If there is a termite shield around the foundation it should be straightened and turned down (at least 2 inches) at approximately a 45-degree angle (fig. 6).

8. Make sure all scraps of lumber or stumps are removed when a building project is complete.

Your Benefits

- Controlling and preventing wood deterioration in your home.
- Preventing costly repairs later.
- Assuring an attractive appearance of the wood in your home.

This guidesheet was reprinted from the United States Department of Agriculture publication, Program Aid No. 1193, Extension Service. It was adapted by UMC Housing and Interior Design Specialist Patricia Klobe.