



TERMITE SPECIES OF ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE IN AUSTRALIA

Coptotermes acinaciformis

This species are found throughout mainland Australia and causes more damage to property than any other species. It is aggressive in its search for food and will attack many items other than wood in its search for cellulose materials. It will damage wall lining boards, electrical wiring and even personal possessions. Colonies often nest in trees or stumps but can form nests without ground contact. There are several other species of ***Coptotermes*** in various regions of Australia, most of which are commercially significant and will cause damage to buildings. Only ***Coptotermes lacteus***, common in eastern and south eastern coastal areas of NSW, is considered not to be of economic importance.

Nasutitermes

There are several species of *Nasutitermes* which may damage timber in service. Soldier termites are distinguished by their pointed heads. *Nasutitermes exitiosus* usually builds a low mound and is more common across southern Australia. *Nasutitermes walkeri* is more coastal in distribution in the east and north east. It builds part of its colony as an arboreal nest on the branch of a tree; the rest is constructed in the ground beneath it. This genus will mainly attack hardwood such as that found in fences and timber decking.

Mastotermes

Mastotermes darwiniensis, the Giant Northern Termite, is the most primitive of the commercially significant species. It shows an ability for sub-colonies to split off from the main colony and produce queens, without a mating flight. Eventually a network of interconnecting sub-colonies is established, which makes control difficult. These large termites, up to 13mm long, can devastate buildings, bridges, poles, live trees and crops such as sugarcane. *Mastotermes* is found mainly north of the Tropic of Capricorn across Australia.

Schedorhinotermes

These termites can cause damage approaching the severity of that caused by *Coptotermes*. They build fragile nests in old tree stumps, in timber buried in the ground, in filled patios and under fireplaces. The damage they cause is distinctive. Although it can be severe it is often patchy, with huge gouges taken out of sound timber, particularly around nails in floor boards or other timbers. *Schedorhinotermes* colonies contain major and minor soldiers of different sizes.

Heterotermes

Species of this genus occur throughout Australia. They are generally considered to do little damage to timber in service, restricting their attentions to weathered timber in fences, decking and posts. Occasionally they can cause superficial damage to sound timber. They may attack timber at the same time as other species, leading to confusion over which species is causing the main damage.