

# What's the Difference Between Infestation and Infection

**A**s members of the Orange County Association of REALTORS®, we are committed to increasing the awareness of owners and REALTORS® in the areas of structural infestations and infections, and the factors involved in their solution.

There are basic signs of probable infestations or infections which are noticeable, not only to those who are licensed, but also to anyone who is interested and informed. These signs will alert you to obtain the qualified assistance necessary for a proper inspection and recommendations. Notice that these areas are easily incorporated in your existing inspections of grounds and property.

The terms "infestations" and "infections" can be segregated into two general groups. Infestations, which are most commonly noticed and easier to identify, are caused by the infiltration of an outside source, such as subterranean termites, Drywood termites or other wood-boring insects. Evidence of termite infestations is most commonly seen in the insects' dietary residue (pellets), detached wings, and tiny holes in the wood. The structural pest control industry has made great progress in development of EPA-approved toxins and more effective methods of application in the areas of localized termite treatment. While helping to alleviate the traditional stigmas of mandatory fumigation, local treatments also offer the benefits of a residual barrier against reinfestations at the treated areas.

Localized treatments, performed in conjunc-

tion with the pressurized application of a desiccant, leaves an obstacle to reinfestations through the dehydration of alates (winged termites) or swarmers, whose sole intent is establishing a new colony.

Infections are less obvious to the untrained eye. They are defined as moisture in direct contact with wood, often identified in inac-

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*- Tony Angelo*

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cessible areas. This creates the perfect environment for fungal growth, due to lack of ventilation. Fungus is a living organism that invades the wood cells and extracts the nutrients from the cell walls. This causes the wood to lose its integrity and results in dry rot, which can lead to major wood replacement. The simplest signs are discoloration in wood, stains, surface fungal growth, constant

dampness, and cracks in deck coating. Severe cost usually is incurred with fungal growth and dry rot.

Fungus and dry rot create far more structural damage than termites. Fungus growth is caused by leaks, and many times it is caused by improperly adjusted sprinkler systems. Fungus spores collect in wood as the tree grows. The spores lie dormant in the lumber, much like a seed in the desert. When moisture reaches the spores, they send out a root type structure called mycelium. The fungus feeds on the cellulose which can cause the lumber to lose structural integrity. If this condition is left uncorrected, the end result is dry rot damage wood replacement.

Owners and REALTORS® are becoming increasingly aware of the advantages of utilizing structural pest control firms, who are not only concerned with the inspection and recommendations, but also are knowledgeable concerning the uniform building code and local codes, and are licensed to perform all structural repairs and replacements. Knowing where to obtain professional help will minimize your maintenance costs, reduce liability exposure and provide warranties and guarantees required for escrow.

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