

Termites do not roar into a home like a raccoon in the attic. They work quietly, often for years, and the first clue is a soft baseboard that gives under a fingertip or a swarm of winged reproductives around a [bed bug removal near me](#) window in spring. By the time someone searches for pest control near me, the colony has likely been feeding out of sight. Getting control is not about one magic product. It is about matching the right method to the biology of the species, the construction of the building, and the constraints on site, then executing the work with care.

I have spent a good part of my career in crawlspaces and around slab edges. When termite control succeeds, it is because the plan addresses how termites actually move and feed, not just where we wish they would go. What follows is a field level look at soil, bait, and wood treatments, including where each shines, where each is limited, and what a homeowner or facility manager should expect from professional pest control.



Which termites, and why it matters

Most structural infestations in North America involve subterranean termites, including eastern, western, and Formosan species. They nest in the soil and require moisture, moving through the ground and into structures via mud tubes, cracks, and expansion joints. They are the reason soil treatments and bait systems dominate the modern toolkit.

Drywood termites are a different animal. They live and feed entirely within dry wood, often entering through gaps in fascia or eaves, kicking out frass that looks like sand through tiny holes. They are common in coastal and warm regions. Soil work does not touch them. Wood treatments and whole structure fumigation are the primary options.

There are also dampwood termites, tied to high moisture wood, usually in very specific conditions such as wood in contact with saturated soil. They rarely infest the interior of a properly maintained home.

Proper identification matters because it dictates where the fight happens. With subterranean termites, the battlefield is the soil and the paths they use to reach the house. With drywood termites, the fight is inside the wood.

How a seasoned inspector reads a structure

Good termite control starts with a termite inspection that looks beyond obvious damage. A careful technician will check the soil grade, gutter discharge, downspout terminations, mulch depth, and whether the siding laps below grade. They will probe baseboards in moisture prone rooms, inspect behind access panels at bath traps, and view the sill plate and piers in crawlspaces with a strong light. In a slab house, they will study slab edges, cold joints, garage steps, and where utility penetrations pass through concrete. In basements they will look at sill plates on the top of foundation walls and around lally columns.

Tools help. A moisture meter reveals damp baseplates and window sills. A borescope allows a peek inside voids. Infrared cameras can sometimes show a cold moisture track, but they are not a silver bullet. Most of the time, an inspector’s best tool is a screwdriver and time on task.

What we are trying to answer during pest inspection services:

- Is it subterranean or drywood activity?
- How are they entering and where are the conducive conditions?

- What structural features will limit or complicate treatment, such as a monolithic slab, radiant heat, French drains, or a shared party wall?

These answers shape the treatment plan and help set realistic expectations and costs.

Soil treatments: building a treated zone that termites cannot cross

For subterranean termites, liquid soil termiticides remain the backbone of control in residential pest control and commercial settings. The goal is not to soak the whole yard. The objective is to create a continuous, well bonded treated zone along and beneath the foundation that termites cannot avoid as they forage.

Modern soil termiticides are mostly non repellent chemistries. Actives like fipronil and imidacloprid are undetectable to termites, so workers pass through treated soil, pick up a dose on their cuticle, and transfer it to nestmates when they groom. This is very different from older repellent actives that could split the colony's foraging pattern and leave untreated bypasses. In my experience, non repellent products deliver more consistent results on complex foundations.

What the work actually looks like

- Trenching and rodding: Along exterior foundation walls, the crew digs a shallow trench 6 to 8 inches wide against the foundation, then uses a termiticide rod to inject at set intervals to prescribed depths. The trench is backfilled with treated soil. The application rate is not a splash and dash. Labels call for volumes on the order of 4 gallons per 10 linear feet for most soils. Clay, sand, and loam handle the termiticide differently, so the technician must adjust technique for good distribution.
- Drilling through slabs: Where the foundation edge is under a patio, walkway, or garage slab, the technician drills small holes, typically 1/2 inch, through the concrete near the joint and rods the termiticide under the slab. The pattern must be close enough to overlap the spread of the chemical plume. Holes are then plugged and patched.
- Interior work: When evidence points to an active entry under a garage step, bath trap, or interior slab crack, strategic interior drilling may be needed. No one enjoys drilling tile, so we look for logical places like closet corners or carpeted areas when possible. Foam formulations help treat inaccessible voids.
- Bath traps and wall voids: In slab on grade homes, the tub is often boxed out of the slab. That unprotected void can be a termite highway. We open the access panel if it exists, enlarge it if it does not, treat the soil beneath, and install a permanent cover if needed. We also foam wall voids at obvious entry points.

Longevity and maintenance

Quality non repellent termiticides can provide residual protection in soil on the order of 5 to 10 years or more, with real performance depending on soil type, rainfall, and disturbance from landscaping or construction. Houses with French drains or underground streams can be tricky, because moving water can strip the chemical or prevent a continuous treatment. In those cases, I often pair liquid work with a bait system for redundancy.

Special constraints

If the property draws drinking water from a well, or has a cistern or sump in close proximity, label restrictions may force untreated gaps or modified methods. In basements with interior perimeter drains or in older homes with stone foundations and voids, getting a true continuous treated zone can be difficult. That is where the experience of a licensed pest control specialist matters. We can usually still get control, but we may set different expectations and plan for follow up inspections and spot treatments.

Bait systems: steady pressure that takes down the colony

Termite baiting changed the industry by eliminating the need to drench soil. Instead, we use the termites' own foraging to deliver an engineered food source laced with a slow acting active, such as noviflumuron or diflubenzuron, which halts molting and quietly collapses the colony. The slow action is intentional. Workers continue to feed, share food, and spread the active through trophallaxis before anyone senses a problem.

How a proper bait installation works

Stations are installed at intervals, typically every 8 to 12 feet, around the structure. Depth matters. We set them so the wood monitor or bait matrix sits in the top few inches of soil where termites naturally forage. On large properties or

along long features like rear decks, we may add extra stations to tighten the ring. In rocky soils we sometimes core drill and set sleeves to ensure consistent contact.

This map was created by a user. [Learn how to create your own](#)

Initial monitoring catches which stations draw activity. Modern systems allow immediate deployment of bait without a drawn out pre monitoring phase, which accelerates control. From there, the service is a cadence of inspections, bait replenishment, and data. Good routes run on 30 to 90 day intervals depending on season and pressure.

Pros and trade offs

Baits are extremely targeted, with low active ingredient use and minimal risk to pets or landscaping, making them a solid fit for eco friendly pest control preferences and sites with wells or drainage challenges. They also adapt well to complex foundations where a continuous liquid barrier is not feasible, such as townhomes with shared walls, slab to slab joints, and buildings with radiant heat.

They do require persistence. Establishing feeding and collapsing a colony can take months, particularly for large colonies or in cooler soils where feeding slows. Homeowners sometimes expect overnight change after a swarm. My rule of thumb is to communicate a realistic time frame. We can reduce risk quickly, but complete colony elimination with baits is a season scale process, not a weekend miracle.

Baits are also a service, not a single event. The value is in routine inspections, station maintenance, and record keeping. Many pest control companies place termite baiting under a subscription. That ongoing engagement is not a sales trick, it is how the system works. If your local pest control provider proposes baits, ask about inspection intervals, what happens if stations are damaged by landscaping, and how quickly they respond to new activity.

Wood treatments: borates, foams, and when fumigation is the right call

Wood treatments play two roles. As a preventative, borate solutions applied to exposed framing during construction protect sill plates, studs, and joists before the drywall goes up. As a corrective, targeted applications into galleries and voids can stop localized activity, especially for drywood termites.

Borates

Disodium octaborate tetrahydrate, applied as a solution to raw wood, diffuses into the surface layer. Termites ingest the treated cellulose and cannot derive nutrition. The key is access. On an existing home, only exposed or opened wood can be treated. That makes borates ideal in remodels where walls are open, crawlspaces with exposed joists, or attics. In pre construction work, a borate pretreat is a cost effective add on that many builders overlook. It is a quiet layer of protection that complements soil pretreats at the slab.

Foams and dusts

For active drywood galleries, technicians drill small holes into the affected timber and inject foam termiticides or apply silica aerogel or borate dusts. The foam travels into the labyrinth, contacting workers and soldiers, then dries to a residual. It is meticulous work. You need to map the gallery, not just blast and hope. Tapping and listening for the hollow change in pitch, reading kick out holes, and following frass patterns guide the placements.

Whole structure fumigation

Where drywood activity is widespread or inaccessible, whole structure fumigation with sulfuryl fluoride is often the only reliable way to reach every gallery. It is not the same as a pesticide fogger. The structure is sealed and the fumigant is introduced and monitored to specific concentrations for a set exposure period. After aeration and clearance testing, the building is safe to reenter. There is no residual after fumigation, so pairing it with exclusion and paint or sealant repairs to entry points matters. Not every region or pest control company offers fumigation. In jurisdictions where it is available, it is a specialty service performed by certified fumigators with tightly controlled protocols.

Quick comparison of termite treatment approaches

Method	Best for	Strengths	Limitations	Typical maintenance
Liquid soil termiticides	Subterranean termites, most foundations	Fast knockdown, long residual, strong protection perimeter	Drilling and trenching needed, water features may limit use	Reinspect annually, spot treat as needed every 5 to 10 years
Bait systems	Subterranean termites, complex or sensitive sites	Low active ingredient, minimal disruption, adaptable to site constraints	Slower to eliminate colonies, requires ongoing service	Inspect and service every 30 to 90 days, continuous
Borate wood treatments	Prevention on new builds, exposed framing	Penetrates wood surface, low odor, long lasting in protected wood	Limited to exposed or opened wood, not a stand alone fix for subterranean activity	Reapply if wood is stripped or weathered
Localized foam or dust	Drywood or localized subterranean entry points	Targets galleries, minimal disruption to occupants	Requires access and careful mapping, may miss hidden galleries	Re inspect treated areas seasonally
Whole structure fumigation	Widespread drywood infestations	Reaches every gallery in the volume	No residual, logistics of tenting and vacating	Follow with inspections and preventative repairs

How pros choose a plan

On a straightforward ranch with a slab on grade, no wells, and clear evidence of subterranean feeding along the rear wall, a full perimeter non repellent soil treatment is usually the fastest and most economical. On a 3 story townhome with slab joints at every party wall and a finished patio poured tight to the rear threshold, a bait system often wins. On a 1920 pier and beam with a damp crawlspace, I lean toward repairing moisture issues, spot liquid treatments at piers and supports, and adding baits as insurance.

On the drywood side, if I find a single window header with frass and a gallery I can map, localized foam and dust with a follow up can be perfect. If I find frass across multiple rooms, stained ceilings from kick out holes, and activity in inaccessible beams, I talk honestly about fumigation, temporary relocation, and what to expect.

Every plan benefits from integrated pest management thinking. Fix what draws termites in the first place. Lower soil grades that touch siding. Add downspout extensions that discharge 6 to 10 feet from the foundation. Replace landscaping timbers set against the house. Termite control is a service, but it is also a building science exercise.

Safety, environmental notes, and what pet safe really means

Homeowners often ask about child safe or pet safe pest control. With termiticides, the exposure pathway is different from indoor sprays. Soil treatments are placed into soil or under slabs, then covered. Once dry and bound to soil particles, the likelihood of a child or dog contacting treated zones is low. Baits use minute amounts of active ingredient locked inside stations that require a special key, and the actives target insect growth processes. That does not mean care is optional. A certified exterminator follows label directions, respects well setbacks, and keeps products out of drains and waterways.

For those focused on green pest control, baits are as close as we get to an organic pest control approach for termites. True organic compliance is tricky in structural termite work, but there are low impact choices. Borates are mineral salts. They do not off gas and have long safety histories when used correctly on wood. A knowledgeable pest control company can outline the relative profiles so you can make an informed choice.

What to expect during service

A professional pest control visit for termites is not a 30 minute stop. A proper termite inspection usually runs 60 to 90 minutes on a typical home, longer on complex construction. If you opt for a liquid treatment, expect a crew of 2 to 4 technicians on site most of a day, sometimes two. Drilling is loud. Trenching is messy for a few hours. Good teams clean up, patch holes, and rinse concrete dust.

With baits, the initial installation is less disruptive. Technicians will locate and paint mark underground utilities where required, use a power auger or digging tool to set stations, and map their locations. A neat diagram with station numbers should be part of your file. Follow up visits are brief but regular.

A short homeowner prep list that makes a big difference

- Clear 18 to 24 inches of access around the foundation by trimming shrubs and pulling back mulch.
- Unlock gates and provide access to garages, crawlspace entries, and attics.
- Mark known irrigation lines, landscape lighting wires, or invisible dog fences to prevent drilling mishaps.
- Move stored items 2 feet from walls in garages and basements so inspectors can see slab edges.
- If you have pets, plan to keep them indoors or off treated zones until technicians advise.

Costs, contracts, and why warranties vary

Pest control cost for termite work ranges widely, and there are reasons beyond company branding. Soil treatments are usually priced by the linear foot of the structure’s perimeter plus complexity factors for drilling through patios or slab. In many markets, full liquid treatments land in the low to mid four figures, but a small outbuilding might be less and a large home with extensive concrete can exceed that. Bait system pricing is a blend of a one time installation fee and a service subscription. Expect a few hundred to over a thousand for install depending on structure size, then an annual or quarterly fee for inspections and bait maintenance.

Warranties differ. Some pest control plans include a repair warranty that covers new termite damage after treatment up to a cap. Others offer a retreat only warranty that promises to retreat if activity returns but does not pay for repairs. Repair warranties cost more because they transfer risk to the company. Read the renewal terms. Many contracts require an annual reinspection for the warranty to remain in force, which is sensible. Termites are a year round pest control concern in many climates, and fresh eyes catch conditions before they become problems.

Transferability is another point when buying or selling. A transferable warranty is attractive. Ask whether there is a fee to transfer and what documentation is needed. Many states regulate these contracts, and a licensed pest control provider will be transparent about conditions.

Insurance rarely covers termite damage. That reality makes a modest annual investment in preventative pest control look smart, especially in high pressure regions.

Special scenarios and how we handle them

Historic homes with rubble foundations challenge the idea of a continuous barrier. We often apply a blend of interior foam to voids, targeted soil work at obvious entry points, and baits. Documentation matters in these cases because future owners and inspectors will want a paper trail.

Homes with wells or cisterns require exact measurements to honor label setbacks. I have declined to treat portions of foundations to avoid contaminating a water source, then compensated with baits and additional monitoring. That is a better outcome than trying to force a product where it does not belong.

Heavily landscaped properties with stone edging mortared to patios can make drilling almost surgical. Expect a frank conversation about where holes will go. A top rated pest control team will patch neatly and color match plugs where possible.

Commercial pest control for businesses such as restaurants, warehouses, or offices layers in access scheduling and safety plans. Termite work often happens off hours. For facilities with slab penetrations for utilities and drains, a detailed map is critical. Maintenance teams appreciate clear station maps and service logs that satisfy auditors.

DIY fixes and when to call a pro

Hardware store stakes or spray cans feel tempting, but true termite control is not an over the counter job. The active ingredients and application methods that solve real infestations are regulated and require training. Misapplied sprays can repel termites and push them to new entry points. Under dosing soil is worse than doing nothing because [Buffalo pest control](#) it creates a patchwork of partial barriers. When homeowners want to be hands on, I steer them toward moisture control, sealing, and landscaping corrections, and leave the structural control to a certified exterminator with the right tools.

If you are seeing swarms inside, mud tubes advancing across a foundation, or soft, blistered wood that yields to a probe, call a local pest control company quickly. Same day pest control is not always necessary unless you have safety issues, but getting on a schedule matters during swarm season. If you are buying a home, include a termite inspection. A free pest inspection can be useful as a screening tool, but for real due diligence, pay for a licensed termite inspection with a detailed report.

Prevention that pays for itself

Termites love moisture, wood to soil contact, and hidden pathways. Addressing those three themes reduces risk dramatically.

Lower mulch to keep it 4 to 6 inches below siding and away from weep screeds. Install splash blocks or, better yet, downspout extensions that carry water well away from the foundation. Replace rotten door jamb bottoms with PVC or rot resistant wood and install metal kick plates where sprinklers hit. In crawlspaces, ensure proper cross ventilation or, in sealed designs, install dehumidification and vapor barriers correctly. Keep firewood stored off the ground and away from the house.

Builders can help by installing gravel filled bath traps with removable covers, isolating interior slabs from exterior footers with expansion joint materials, and specifying borate pretreatments and sill seal gaskets at framing. Small choices during construction save thousands later.

Where other pests fit, and why termite plans should be separate

Many homeowners bundle general pest control for ants, roaches, spiders, and rodents with termite plans. That is convenient, and one provider managing insect control, rodent control, and termite treatment brings accountability. Just recognize that termite control is its own discipline. Bed bug treatment, mosquito control, flea and tick control, and wasp or bee removal are different crews with different calendars. If your provider offers quarterly pest control or monthly pest control for general pests, verify that termite inspection and service are documented separately with their own warranty terms.

When a provider can handle rat control, mice control, and wildlife removal under one roof, it streamlines communication, especially for property managers. But if you are selecting a company solely for termite work, judge them on termite specific experience, training, and the clarity of their termite control plan.

Final thoughts from the field

Termite control rewards thoroughness. A beautiful bait map that is missing stations along a narrow side yard is not beautiful. A liquid treatment that skips drilling under a stoop because it is hard invites failure. A localized foam job that does not trace a gallery’s full path is a half measure. The best pest control companies take the time to do the unglamorous work, explain trade offs, and document what they did.

Whether you choose a soil barrier, a bait system, targeted wood treatments, or a combination, ask questions until you understand the why behind the plan. Good professionals welcome that conversation. They know that termite control is not just a product. It is a process, tuned to one building at a time, and it works when the strategy matches the biology and the structure.