

Taking the fight to termites

<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2009/may/03/tr-taking-the-fight-to-termites/>

The Tampa Tribune

Published: May 3, 2009

It's termite-swarming season in Florida, and homeowners should take care to avoid being victimized by the pests - or unscrupulous pest control companies. Pete Cardillo, a Tampa lawyer specializing in termite damage claims, offers the following tips to protect yourself:

- Lots of bugs flying inside or around the house may be a sign of a termite swarm. Or it may be flying ants. Take a close look: Termites have straight abdomens, while ants have a narrow "waist" between segments.
- Look for sagging or bowing interior walls, which could be a sign of termite damage behind the wall.
- Look for the small, transparent wings that termites shed.
- Small drinking-straw-width tubes of mud on exterior walls may be evidence of termite infestation.
- Wet or deteriorated wood, or curious dust around windowsills, can also be a telltale sign of termite activity.

Hiring a pest control company:

- Many large, national pest control firms focus more on sales than on servicing existing clients.
- A good, medium-size, regional company that's been around for years and is well established in the community is your best bet.
- Read your contract. This includes looking at the back of the contract. That's often where you'll find disclaimers of liability and arbitration clauses, which can make it difficult or impossible to sue the company for incompetence or fraud.
- Make sure you get a repair guarantee. This is critical. Even seemingly minor termite damage can cost thousands of dollars to repair. Extensive termite damage can require a house to be torn down and rebuilt.
- Make sure the contract spells out a mandatory routine inspection of your property, inside and out. Don't agree to anything less frequent than an annual inspection.
- Make sure the contract stipulates that your property will be treated with the liquid chemical pesticide Termidor, which is far superior to traditional "bait station" approaches.

A staff report