

CHOOSING A PEST CONTROL COMPANY

It is important to resist the tendency to panic and make decisions too quickly before you have all the facts at hand.

The first step is to resist any high pressure sales and take some time to understand all your options. There are differences in termite bids and treatments. You need to be critical about what you are told, read as much as you can, filter through all the information, and do your best to make a final decision about treatments. You will need to have your house inspected. The inspector may move directly into a selling mode, figuring that this is his best shot at making his sale.. The inspector needs to thoroughly inspect your home, looking for evidence of termites, termite damage, and structural problems that might complicate a treatment.

Next, you will need to gather information to help you decide whether or not to treat your home. You need to do the following: 1) Find out if there are live termites doing damage to the structure. 2) Understand how each company will treat your situation. 3) Investigate the knowledge, ability and experience of the person(s) who will actually do the application. 4) Determine whether the bids are reasonable, based on the size of your house. In addition, you will want to work with a company that has built a good reputation and has insurance in case there are any problem with the treatment.

Inspection. Arrange to have 4-5 professional pest companies inspect the structure and estimate the cost writing and detail all aspects of the treatment. Make sure you have answers to the following questions and those on the next page:

1. Were live termites found? Where?
2. How extensive is the damage?
3. Is the damage old or new?
4. Is there evidence of a previous treatment?
5. How much damage is evidence?

We generally recommend treating the structure only if termites are found inside the house. However, you should understand that evidence of termites and damaged wood can be in inaccessible areas that make it difficult or impossible to detect. There will be a clause on the inspection form that releases the inspector from finding termites or termite damage in hidden locations.

Treatment Timing.

In the case of a real estate transaction, it is the lending institution that requires a termite inspection of the property. The lending institution wants to make sure termites are not devaluing the home in case the owner defaults on the loan. It is also the prudent for persons who purchase properties without borrowing money from lending institution to have the property inspected for the termites.

The Bidding Process.

To discriminate between companies, ask each company to describe in detail the precise procedures that will be taken to treat the structure. Make sure they have answered the following questions:

1. What chemical will be used?
2. Where will the chemical be applied? How deep around the basement?
3. How and where will holes be drilled to incorporate the chemical?
4. What special techniques will be used in areas where floor covering is present?
5. How will inaccessible areas and /or voids be treated?
6. How will the injection points(holes) be sealed?

Environmental and Safety Concerns

You also need to ask what application methods will be practiced to insure a safe treatment for your family.

References and Qualifications.

Ask the pest control company for several references. Ask for the names of persons who have had a treatment by the company done within the last year. Call the references but understand that the company would not give you names of references if they thought there was a problem.

What are the qualifications of the person actually doing the treatment? Many times, the person who represents the company in the inspection and bidding process is not the same person who will be doing the treatment. All other things being equal, the most important factor is the competency of the person(s) who are actually doing the treatment because the placement of the insecticide is critical for the treatment success. How long has this person been in the pest control business? How many termite treatments has he/she done?

Why Does It Cost So Much?

The strategy of a barrier treatment is to establish a continuous insecticide barrier between the colony in the soil and the wood in the home. To properly treat a house, insecticides must be applied in the soil around the foundation.

Making Decisions

Making sure it gets done right. How do you ensure that the maximum concentration will be used, and that the chemical will be injected deeply enough? The only way to know for sure is to be at home during the treatment, watch and take notes.

Warranties

Before you sign anything, be sure you read the fine print. In the case of termite treatment, you can think of a warranty as being similar to termite insurance. The company may offer a warranty for a year. After that, you will need to pay an inspection fee that is typically 1/10 of the cost of a treatment.

Insurance.

Will you get a complete barrier treatment, or will the company only do a spot treatment in the area where the termites have been found? A spot treatment may be of little value because the termites could enter the structure somewhere else. If you decide to invest in termite insurance, make sure that a complete treatment (either chemical barrier or bait) will be given to you. Otherwise, the insurance is of little value.

Economics of bait Treatments

Bait treatments often cost so much as barrier treatments do. Obviously, there isn't the high cost of chemicals, but the users of this new technology are paying for the research and development costs that the manufacturer had with the bait. The pest control company also has a large investment in training employees to learn how to use the bait. Someone must check the bait stations and install the baits on an ongoing basis. A sophisticated computer system may be used to keep track of all the bait stations and record information.

Warranties/Insurance of Bait Treatments.

Some companies may offer a warranty against future damage to your home. The problem with this type of warranty is proving when the damage occurred. It is possible to determine future damage only if you can document the extent of existing damage. With the exception of a newly constructed house, it is nearly impossible to prove when the damage occurred. Collecting on this type of warranty would be difficult. Be cautious.