

DOUBLE TROUBLE: UF/IFAS RESEARCHERS FIND ANOTHER TERMITE IN SOUTH FLORIDA AS DESTRUCTIVE AS FORMOSAN "SUPER TERMITE"

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla.---Another highly destructive termite - a close relative of the Formosan "super termite" that's gnawing its way across many Southern states - has become established in South Florida, according to University of Florida researchers.

"The Asian subterranean termite, a major pest in tropical areas such as Brazil and the West Indies, was not considered to be a serious threat to Florida until now," said Nan-Yao Su, a professor of entomology with UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, or UF/IFAS. "I thought it could not survive north of the tropics, and I am puzzled by its rapid spread in South Florida."

The pest (*Coptotermes gestroi*) was found in Key West and Miami a few years ago, and now UF researchers have discovered a well-established population in Riviera Beach, more than 70 miles north of Miami. The researchers say they're not sure how much farther north the tropical species can move and survive.

"Four buildings in a one-square-mile area of Riviera Beach are infested with the termite, and we believe there may be more infestations in the area," Su said. "We are asking those who think they have seen this termite to contact us at the UF/IFAS Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center."

Su is working with Rudolph Scheffrahn, a professor of entomology at the center, and Brian Cabrera, an assistant professor of entomology, to track and stop the invasive pest.

Su said South Florida is the only place on Earth where the new Asian termite and the Formosan termite (*C. formosanus*) share the same territory. The new termite is considered to be the most destructive pest in many countries of the tropics - areas between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn.

To identify possible infestations of the pest, Su said residents should look for winged termites flying around lights at dusk and in the evening. The head and dorsal surface of the body are dark brown in contrast to its yellow-brown underside, thereby giving the flying insects a "two-toned" appearance. Termite "soldiers" are characterized by their teardrop shaped heads and the presence of a pore that secretes a sticky, milk-like fluid.

When in doubt, homeowners should contact a professional pest control operator and have a thorough inspection of their property. For more information on the new termite, visit UF's "Featured Creature" and "Pest Alert" Web sites.

<<http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu/urban/termites/havilandi.htm>>

<http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu/urban/termites/formosan_termite.htm>

Meanwhile, as UF researchers and pest control officials try to get an accurate estimate of the new termite's range in South Florida, the Formosan termite continues to spread its destruction across Florida and much of the Southeastern United States.

First identified by UF/IFAS researchers in Miami-Dade and Broward counties in the 1980s, the Formosan termite is now well established along the Southeastern coast of Florida. Infestations have been found in 14 other Florida counties: Citrus, Collier, Duval, Escambia, Hillsborough, Lee, Leon, Marion, Martin, Orange, Pasco, Palm Beach, Putnam and Volusia.

Fortunately, Su developed a new baiting system that controls the Formosan and other subterranean termites, including the new Asian termite. His bait system has a chemical called noviflumuron, a growth regulator that prevents termites from molting, thereby reducing the ability of the worker population to sustain underground colonies. The chemical has a low toxicity to humans and the environment. Less than one gram kills an entire colony containing millions of termites.

The control is marketed worldwide as the Sentricon Termite Colony Elimination System by Dow AgroSciences.