



Subject: Formosan Subterranean Termites

Many of you have read emails circulating about the possibility of Formosan Subterranean Termites in mulch coming from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

Here are John Ferguson's thoughts that he has shared with others regarding this subject.

The risk factor is probably low if a few simple items are considered.

1. Formosan termites have already been found in at least 16 Texas counties including Brazoria, Harris, Galveston, and Liberty so we are not introducing them as they are already here.
2. The termites are attracted to fresh ground material that is rich in cellulose, hence the mulch produced from the storm clean-up is a good food source for all termite species.
3. Beaumont/Port Arthur area into East Texas also had a lot of storm damage (over 1 million cubic yards of mulch). Due to the cost of transportation, we are more likely to get mulch from that area where the risk is slightly lower. A lot of this material from New Orleans will be used as boiler fuel, shipped overseas a pulp[ and fiber for paper and pressed wood products since New Orleans is a major port city.
4. If the mulch is composted first, then the risk factor is very low. The heat of the composting (170 degrees F) will kill any insect. As the lignin and cellulose is broken down into humus there is far less food resources hence after composting it is not very attractive to the termites. In addition, the good microbes in the composted mulch will attack and parasitize the termites killing them (several species of fungus and bacteria have already been identified that attack termites).
5. If a person has used fungicides on their lawn for brown patch, black spot on roses, etc. then they have killed off the beneficial fungus in the soil that would have helped protect them from termite problems. Hence they are at a much higher risk.
6. Some of this storm produced mulch will most likely end up at the box stores at a very low price. A good quality mulch (safe to use) will typically retail for \$4-6 for a two-cubic foot bag or the economics do not work. Lower prices indicate lower quality and higher risk not only from termites from other problems as well. Opaque bags are another warning sign (the seller does not want the customer to see what is in the bag).
7. There is a federal quarantine on all wood/mulch products leaving Louisiana unless they have fumigated due to the termite issue.



8. Many of these downed trees were in the areas flooded with toxic chemicals hence they soaked up some of the toxic chemicals (maybe another risk factor) and would be in the mulch and released as it decomposes.

At Nature's Way Resources, we only use material collected locally (brush, limbs, grass and leaves). All material is ground up through our industrial tub grinder. After grinding the material, it is thermal (heat) composted to kill all pathogens and weed seeds. The high temperatures will kill all insects including termites. At NWR, we always take the extra steps to provide our customers with the quality and protection they deserve.