

LSU Addresses Concerns About Post Hurricane-Infested Mulch

BATON ROUGE, La. — Recently, concerns have arisen about mulch produced from the dead trees due to the hurricanes along the U.S. Gulf Coast.

Researchers believe that termites cannot survive the mulching process, but may reinfest mulch after it has been created, bagged and awaiting shipment.

Louisiana State University entomologists also addressing concerns, and have released the following:

To: Forestry and Natural Resource Community
From: Dennis R. Ring

A question has arisen about Formosan subterranean termites being moved in mulch from New Orleans and Louisiana following hurricanes Katrina and Rita. It is true that there is a lot of cellulose debris (wood, paper and their products) in Louisiana following these two hurricanes.

Something has to be done with this debris. Yes, Formosan subterranean termites are found in the parishes affected by the hurricanes and will get in mulch. They also eat the centers of live trees. See the LSU AgCenter Web site (<http://www.lsuagcenter.com>) for information on the biology and ecology of this insect.

However, the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) in Louisiana imposed a quarantine for the Formosan subterranean termite on October 3, 2005, in Calcasieu, Cameron, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa and Washington parishes (the parishes affected by the hurricanes).

Thus, efforts are in place to prevent the spread of the Formosan subterranean termite in mulch or other materials. Additionally, the insect may be managed using integrated pest management.

Provisions of the quarantine imposed by the LDAF include:

* Movement of wood or cellulose material is prohibited unless either

(1) it is fumigated or treated for Formosan subterranean termites and is approved for movement by the commissioner or his designee(s) or (2) written authorization is given by the commissioner or his designee(s) for the movement of untreated wood or cellulose material from the quarantined parishes.

* temporary housing cannot be moved from the named parishes until written authorization is given by the commissioner or his designee(s).

* All architectural components (beams, doors and salvaged wood) cannot be sold or placed in any structure in any parish until the architectural components are fumigated or treated for Formosan subterranean termites.

* Additionally, it is strongly recommended and urged that all new construction and reconstruction of structures in the quarantined parishes use termite-resistant materials. Termite-resistant materials include pressure-treated wood (borates, ammonical copper quat or copper azole) or non-cellulose materials.

The quarantine is in effect until it is rescinded by the commissioner of agriculture. If a waiver of a requirement or an authorization to carry out one of the prohibited acts is granted, it does not rescind or modify the quarantine.

NPMA Release on Post-Hurricane Mulch

There has been a flurry of internet traffic related to reports of potential spread of Formosan subterranean termites (FST) in mulch being produced from infested trees in hurricane effected areas of Louisiana.

This email erroneously implies that large retail home stores will purchase and re-sell bags of this mulch around the country – thereby spreading FST to currently infestation-free areas.

In fact, Louisiana's Department of Agriculture & Forestry (LDAF) has established a quarantine that requires all woody debris in the quarantined (hurricane-effected) areas to be shipped to an approved landfill within the designated quarantine area. All contractors that are mulching and hauling the debris know the regulations and are abiding by them. LDAF has asked that anyone with knowledge debris moving out of a quarantine area to contact their 24-hour hotline.

None of this should imply that mulch and termites are not connected at all. Mulch can be a source of termite infestations in and around your home. The best defense for homeowners is to keep ALL mulch away from their home's foundation. Other tips to avoid attracting termites include:

- As most termites are drawn to moisture, avoid water accumulation near your home's foundation. Divert water away with properly functioning downspouts, gutters and splash blocks.
- Quickly repair house damage from a leaky roof or window as termites can thrive in this moisture.
- Never bury wood scraps or waste lumber in the yard, especially near the home. Remove old tree stumps and roots around and beneath the home.
- Most importantly, eliminate any wood contact with the soil. Maintaining at least a 1-inch gap between the soil and wood portions of the home is ideal.

Homeowners that are worried about termites or believe they have seen signs of termite infestations in and around their home should contact a pest professional. Infestation warning signs include:

- Swarming of winged forms in the fall and spring
- Evidence of mud tunneling in, over and under wood structures
- Wooden structures exhibiting darkening or blistering
- Damaged wood becoming extremely thin and easy to puncture with a knife or a screwdriver

Source:

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