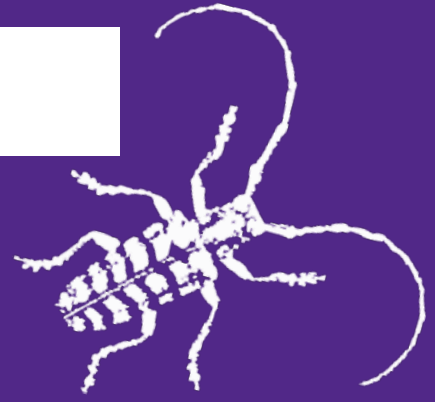


Kansas State University Extension Entomology Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants, Extension Personnel & Homeowners

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News Corner

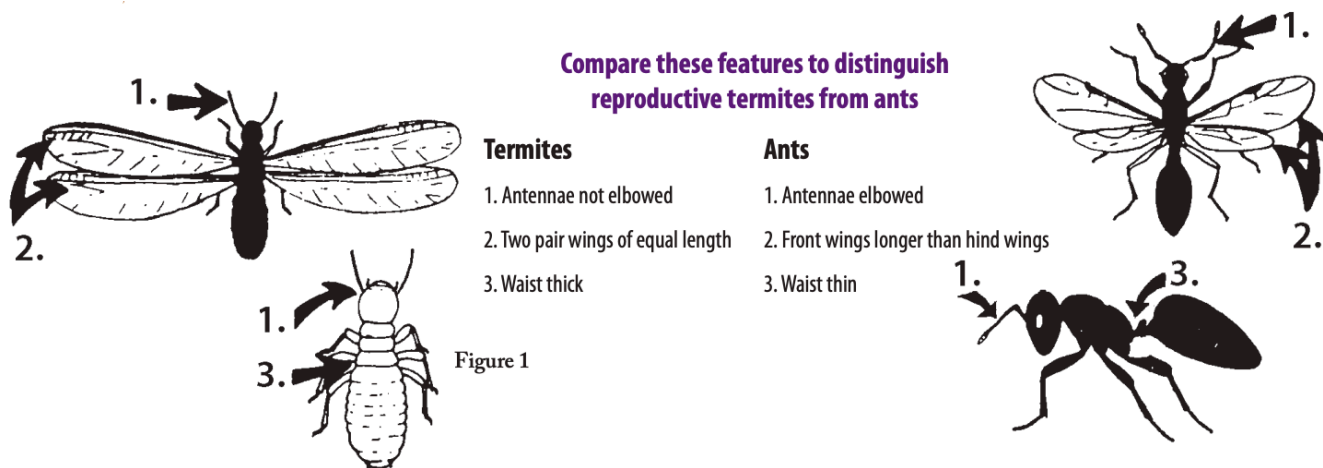
- Know the difference: Termites vs. Ants

NEWS CORNER

Know the difference: Termites vs. Ants

Termites

Historically, termites have been a serious concern to everybody who owns a structure made with wood or wood products. In Kansas, termites are about as common as ants and are often mistaken for ants. Traditionally, the “rule of thumb” about swarming was usually in April. Termites and often ants would swarm about 10 days after the 1st warm spring rains. In the last few years, this has not happened as much, maybe because of recent dry spring conditions, other changes due to climate change, etc. But this year, several reports of termite swarming activity have been reported, and conditions have been relatively dry. So, here is just a quick refresher on distinguishing between termites and ant swarmers (Figure 1).



Compare these features to distinguish reproductive termites from ants

Termites

1. Antennae not elbowed
2. Two pair wings of equal length
3. Waist thick

Ants

1. Antennae elbowed
2. Front wings longer than hind wings
3. Waist thin

Figure 1

Figure 1. Comparison of termites and ants ([MF2887 Ants: Structural Pests](#)).

Ants:

1. Have elbowed antennae: Termite antennae are not elbowed.
2. Have 2 pairs of wings of unequal size. The front pair is larger than the 2nd (hind) pair.
3. Ants have a readily distinguishable “waist”. Termites do not; they are pretty much “cigar” shaped from the head back to the tip of the abdomen.

Both termites and ants have a caste system consisting of workers, soldiers, and reproductives (Figure 2). The workers of both species make up the largest portion of the colonies by far and away. They are small and relatively soft-bodied but do all the “chores” in the nest. The soldiers of both species are fewer in number and scattered throughout areas wherever the workers are active to protect them from their enemies. Reproductives are fewest in number and exist just as their name implies to reproduce. If conditions are right, termites and ant swarms may occur with only a few hundred reproductives to many thousands. If you see a swarm, it is important to identify which species, as treatments for ants is much different than for termites. It is always best to notify a professional pest control operator for proper identification and control.

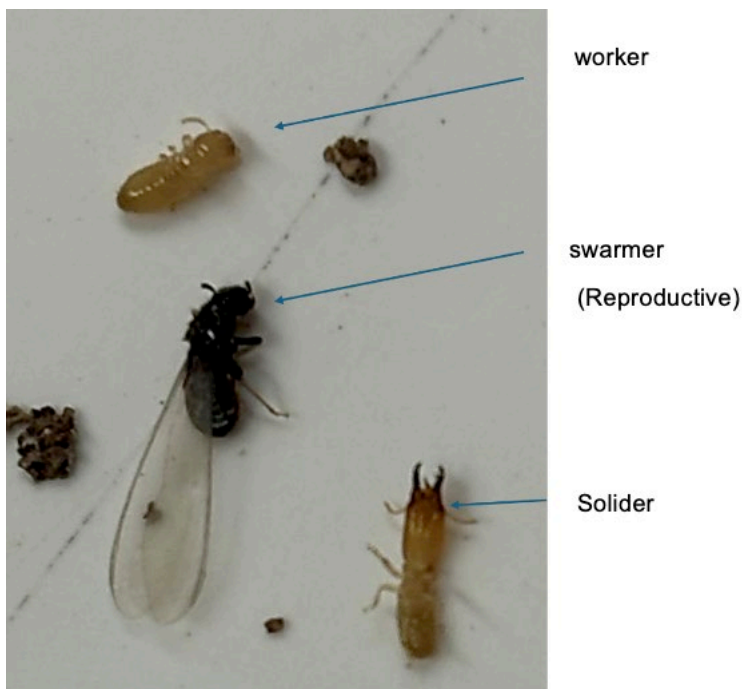


Figure 2. Picture of the three parts of the caste system in a termite colony: a worker, a swarmer, and a soldier (Amie Norton).

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For more information, please refer to [MF3291 Household Pests of Kansas](#) and/or [MF722 Termites](#).

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[HOME](#)

Sincerely,

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