

**Ask Jon Eakes**

# Eliminating termites requires a neighbourhood wide approach

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Termites, native to more tropical climates, are relatively rare in Canada. [Click here](#) if you are not sure it is really termites you have in your house.

Dr. Tim Myles works with the Entomology program at the University of Toronto. He studies bugs. He has done a study on how to cultivate and harvest termites for feedstock for tropical areas, and he has developed and proved a technique for eradicating termites from those few neighbourhoods in Canada that have infestations. The first infestation in Eastern Canada started from termites that arrived at the Toronto docks in WWII and worked their way up into the "Beaches" district. Termites in your neighbourhood can drop your property values by 25%, and require you to maintain regular costly termite control procedures to protect your property.

In this block of wood, you can see the kind of damage that termites can do -- as they never sleep, they eat 24hours a day and number into the millions in each colony. Traditional techniques don't kill the termites but create a toxic chemical barrier deep into the ground all around your house like a moat, recommending to the termites that they go eat the neighbours house. [Click here](#) for more details on Termite Barriers.

Tim's eradication technique is quite interesting. He puts short plastic pipes into the ground around where the termites live and puts a piece of rolled up cardboard into the plastic. The termites love to eat the cardboard so they quickly fill this corrugated roll. He then shows up and picks up the rolls full of termites. He takes them back to the lab, puts the little guys on a tray and carefully dabs very concentrated doses of slow acting poison onto their backs. He then loads them back into their cardboard roll, and returns it to the soil where it came from. The direct application of the poison permits using a total volume of poison that is very low, while for the termite the concentration is very high. The termites have been returned to the same hole they came from, so they quickly find their way back to the main nest. Now Tim counts on the very social nature of these little creatures. They start to clean each other off, as well as continue their normal habit of eating each other's excrement. Since the poison is very slow acting, they are all contaminated before any of them start to die off.

If this was done for one isolated colony, neighbouring colonies would simply take up the slack and get back to the business of eating dead wood and houses. But when this is done on a neighbourhood basis, experiments have shown that they can eliminate the problem. The proof has been done, but funds are lacking to continue attacking the few Canadian communities or neighbourhoods where this is a problem.

If you are a homeowner with a termite problem, you might want to check out Dr. Myles work and bring it to the attention of your city council, or your neighbourhood association. Eliminating the termites, which are not native to Canada except for a small part of BC, makes far more sense than fighting them off house by house forever. For more information check out the University of Toronto web site: [www.utoronto.ca](http://www.utoronto.ca)

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Insects, Termites, Pests, Controls

