Difference Between Termites and Carpenter Ants

By DoMyOwn staff

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To the average homeowner, it can be a challenge to determine whether those small, dark, swarming insects inside the home are Carpenter Ants or Termites. Here are a few key indicators that can help you tell the difference:

Carpenter Ant queen Subterranean Termite

Difference in Wings

- Carpenter Ants and Termites both have four wings. The wings of a Termite are all the same size. The Carpenter Ant, on the other hand, has front wings that are noticeably larger than the hind pair.
- Carpenter Ant wings are pointed, while Termite wings are paddled-shaped.
- Termite wings are twice as long as the body.
- Carpenter Ants often have a black dot on the tip of the front wings, and their dark wing veins will be highly visible. You will not be able to see the veins in a Termite wing with the naked eye.
- Termite wings break off very easily, with barely a touch. Carpenter Ant wings do not break easily. Sometimes you can see broken wings in areas where swarming Termites have been active.

Difference in Antennae
Termite antennae appear very straight. The antennae of ants are noticeably bent as if they had an elbow.

Difference in Body Shape
Carpenter Ants have a thin, narrow waist and have 3 distinct segments. Termites have a broad waist, with only **2** segments.

Difference in Life Stages
Termites go through what is called "gradual metamorphosis", including only the stages of egg, nymph, and adult. So the nymphs look very much like adult workers. In contrast, Carpenter Ants go through a "complete metamorphosis", including egg, larvae, pupa and finally to the adult.

Difference between Termite galleries and Carpenter Ant galleries
Galleries hollowed out by Carpenter Ants are smooth and clean, and are accompanied by piles of fine sawdust and insect parts, called "frass". Wood galleries caused by Termites are accompanied by piles of small, hard, seed-like fecal pellets that do not resemble frass or contain wood shavings and insect parts.

Additional Signs of Carpenter Ant Infestation:

- Winged "swarmers" appearing in great numbers
- Frass (a fine sawdust) falling from the ceiling or left in piles near ant galleries.
- The presence of more than 10 ants daily in rooms other than your kitchen.
- The presence of ants indoors during winter months when the ground outside is frozen
- Faint humming, crunching, or rustling coming from inside a wall, ceiling, or window sill

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