

# Termite, Subterranean



**Genus:** *Reticulitermes* sp.

**Family:** Rhinotermitidae

**Order:** Isoptera

**Class:** Insecta

**Phylum:** Arthropoda

**Kingdom:** Animalia

## Conditions for Customer Ownership per USDA

We hold permits allowing us to transport these organisms. To access permit conditions, [click here](#).

**Never purchase living specimens without having a disposition strategy in place.**

Your termites have arrived! Termites are considered a plant pest by the United States Department of Agriculture. In order to continue to protect our environment you must house your termites in escape-proof containers. With termites it is a good idea to “double container” them. This can be accomplished by placing a small container (such as sandwich size disposable container) inside a larger one (such as a casserole size disposable container.) **Under no circumstances should you release your termites into the wild.** Termites are restricted in some states, so an end user permit is required. Contact us for an up-to-date list of regulations or [click here](#).

## Primary Hazard Considerations

Always wash your hands thoroughly before and after you handle your termites, its food, or anything it has touched.

## Availability

Termites are available year round, although in nature burrow deep into the ground during winter, and dry months. Termites will arrive in a plastic vial with vermiculite, a cardboard insert, and a small piece of wood. We over-pack each order of termites. It is normal to have some deceased termites in the container. You will receive at least the quantity of live termites stated on the container. If you don't see your termites, they may be hiding in the wood or cardboard insert. Break open and examine the wood. Do this carefully because the termites are delicate and can easily be crushed. The piece of cardboard can be pulled apart to release any hidden termites. You should place your termites into a new home as soon as possible. Termites should not be left in the shipping container for more than 2 days after arrival.

## Captive Care

### Termite Habitat:

- Any escape-proof container with holes for oxygen exchange. (We use a plastic shoe box sized container with a lid. The lid should have a 2" x 4" hole covered by a fabric or fine mesh screen.) Line the container with sterile, organic soil or [Vermiculite 20 W 8610](#). Provide pieces of damp, soft, wood for the termites to live in (these can be picked up in wooded areas. To ensure your wood is free of invasive creatures, freeze it overnight, and let it thaw before offering it to your termites). Push the wood about one-third of the way into the soil or vermiculite. A damp, paper towel (preferably un-printed) can be laid across the top of the wood to provide extra food and moisture. Make sure the lid is securely in place on the box. The closed box will help keep the humidity level up, but there should be some air circulation to prevent mold growth.
- Termites should be kept at room temperature (65–75 °F).

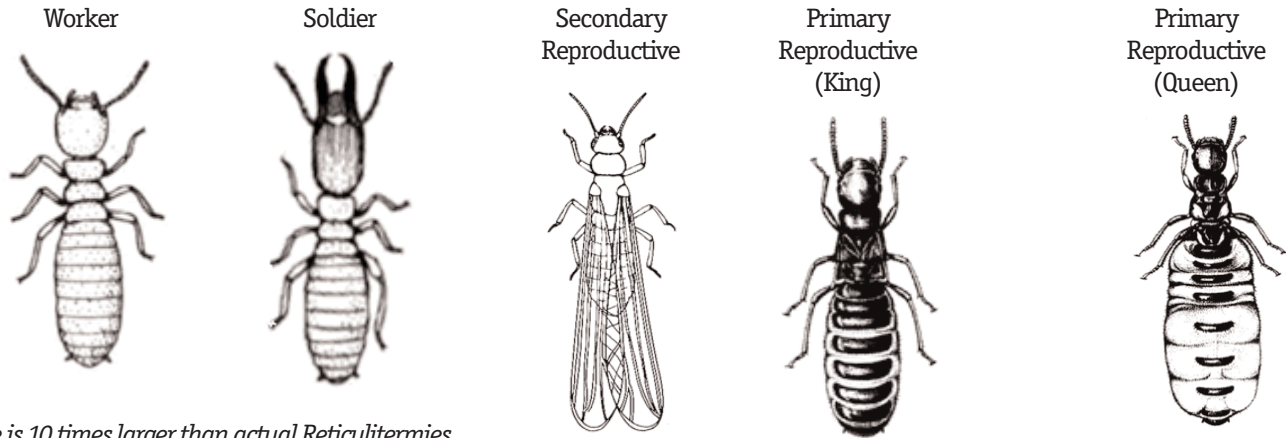
### Termite Care:

- Food: Termites will eat the wood that they are living in. Replenish wood supply when it appears they need more.
- Water: Mist the paper towel daily with fresh water. Keep the habitat damp, but not soaking wet.
- Care: Habitat does not need to be cleaned, but if wood develops mold or fungus, remove immediately.

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## Information

- Method of Reproduction: Sexual, but most are sterile, non-reproducing members of a colony. Customer receives workers and/or soldiers, which are sterile and will not reproduce. Reproductive types are not included in purchased cultures due to State and Federal regulations.
- Live Cycle: Termites have a simple metamorphic life cycle including egg and larval stages.
- Types of Adult *Reticulitermes* and lifespan: The species is typically divided into castes of individuals: reproductive adults with wings, workers, and soldiers. Both workers and soldiers are sterile.



Scale is 10 times larger than actual *Reticulitermes*.

Workers—have pale bodies and lack compound eyes and wings. Main duties include: collecting food, feeding the queen, soldiers, and young, and constructing galleries in the wood. Worker and Soldier termites can live for up to a year when properly cared for.

Soldiers—have pale bodies, large jaws, and no wings. They are the defenders of the colony. They protect it by using their large mandibles.

Secondary Reproductives—have pale bodies, wing buds, and compound eyes. Has the ability to reproduce should the king or queen of the colony die.

Primary Reproductives (King and Queen)—have dark bodies, compound eyes and wings. Queens can lay thousands of eggs a day and can live for about 15 years.

## Wild Habitat

- Many species of termites live throughout world. North American termites are most prevalent in the south eastern states and in California. They live in colonies and can adapt to diverse habitats as long as food is available. They are preyed upon by many insectivores, but they are a primary food source for armadillos. In North America, some types of ants are significant predators of termites.
- Termites from the genus *Reticulitermes* are native to wooded areas of the East Coast of the United States. Subterranean termites live deep underground where they feed on damp wood and wood debris. Once the termites find damp wood, they begin to carve out “galleries.” These galleries distinguish this species from others in that *Reticulitermes* will only cut with the grain of the wood. These termites can also feed on wood found above ground by creating a connection between the soil and the wood they are eating. These connections look like small tunnels of soil running from the ground to the wood.

## Special Notes

- *Reticulitermes* will react to chemicals found in various pen inks, which mimic the pheromones of other termites. If a fresh pen line is drawn on a piece of paper, the termites will precisely follow the trail and even pick up the scents of lost trails.

## Disposition—Do one of the following:

- Place termites in a freezer for 48 hours.
- Place termites in 70% isopropyl alcohol for 24 hours.
- Autoclave the termites @ 121°C for 15 minutes.