



METHODS AND COMPOSITIONS TO MONITOR AND CONTROL TERMITES

BACKGROUND

Termites, known for their destructive activity, are responsible for approximately 1 billion dollars damage to building each year. The onset of the termite activity is generally difficult to detect and control since the destruction occurs internally within wooden structures and may provide no external signs of damage until termite infestation has caused significant destruction.

Generally, prevention of termite destruction has focussed on how to deter termites. For example, coating or treating the wood used in building the structure with materials which termites dislike or rodding and trenching around the perimeter of the home, and injecting a pesticide to protect the home. However, both methods advocate the indiscriminate use of toxicants without the benefit of preliminary monitoring of the area to determine if and where termites are present.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to methods and compositions to monitor for termite infestations and a method for controlling termites if an infestation has occurred. These methods make use of the foraging and other social behaviors of the termite as a way of



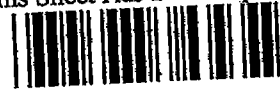
targeting the termite colony itself with an insecticide.

More specifically, the present monitoring composition includes a cellulose source, a nitrogen source, water and agar or other suitable binding nutrient medium. The monitoring method provides placing the monitoring composition in a cartridge having at least one hole near the locus of the suspected termite activity and later checking the cartridge for termites or signs of termites. If termites have infested the cartridge, controlling the termites is accomplished by replacing the first cartridge with a second cartridge which in addition to the monitoring composition, includes a pesticide.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The monitoring composition, and method, unlike the past methods of deterring termites, utilize termites' natural foraging and social behaviors. The composition is designed so that if termites encounter it, they will recruit nestmates, occupy the composition and consume it in preference to the structure to be protected. Rather than focusing on what termites dislike, the present invention is concerned with what termites need and therefor want instinctively to maximize their nutrition.

Termites are primarily known for eating wood; however, wood generally contains both cellulose which termites use and lignin which is indigestible to termites. Therefore, the monitoring composition should contain wood with a high cellulose to lignin ratio. Further, decayed wood is appealing to termites. However, different woods are subject to different kinds of decay. Many are decayed by fungi, but there are many different fungi and therefore thousands of



possible by-products of the decay process. Many of these secondary compounds deter termite feeding or decrease termite survivorship. However, that deterrence is an obstacle for the present invention. Advantageously of the thousands of tree species it is found that white birch (Betula) has the characteristics sought by the present invention. It has a high cellulose to lignin ratio and few, if any, secondary compounds that deter termite feeding or survivorship. Upon decay, it yields a highly attractive food source that stimulates recruitment and consumption. White birch (Betula papyrifera) is especially preferred. However, the cellulose source of the present invention may also be totally or partially synthetic in origin.

The cellulose source of the present invention may include mixtures of different wood species and/or processed purified cellulose and/or derivatives of cellulose such as methoxylated cellulose. For example the cellulose source may be a mixture of decayed birch and commercially available processed or purified cellulose. In accordance with the present invention it may be advantageous for commercial production to employ commercially available forms of cellulose such as microcrystalline cellulose either alone or mixed with small amounts of decayed birch as the cellulose source.

In addition to cellulose, termites need moisture and nitrogen and therefore the monitoring composition preferably includes water and a nitrogen source utilizable by termites, such as uric acid. The addition of a nitrogen source, in accordance with the present invention, significantly increases recruitment, initiation of consumption and rate of utilization of the monitoring composition. Finally, the monitoring composition can also include a suitable nutrient binding medium such as agar or agar/water gel mixture.



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The proportions of the above mentioned components of the monitoring composition are flexible. The percentage of uric acid (nitrogen source) is important because termites can be repelled by too much nitrogen. Generally a preferred composition includes about 0.25% to 5% of uric acid, about 30% to 90% birch (preferably 70% to 85%), 0% to about 1% agar (preferably 0.1% - 1%) and about 10% to 60% water (preferably 15% to 25%).

It is important to note that the monitoring composition does not attract termites per se. One would not want to attract termites and create a problem where none existed before. However, because termites prefer consuming the monitoring composition, once the termites discover it, they will return to it and recruit others. Subterranean termites tunnel underground and will tunnel into the monitoring composition. The termites will stimulate other colony members to use the food, then return to the colony and share the food. These behavioral patterns are utilized to great advantage in the monitoring and controlling methods of the present invention.

The monitoring method of the present invention includes placing the monitoring composition in a cartridge having at least one hole near the locus of the suspected termite activity and later checking the cartridge for termites, signs of termites or termite damage. The cartridge is more fully described in patent application serial no. _____ filed concurrently herewith and hereby incorporated by reference. The cartridge may be placed in the ground around the perimeter of a home, for example. Alternatively the cartridge may be placed directly on wooden beams. After allowing the termites, if any, an opportunity to locate the monitoring composition, the cartridge is



removed and checked for visual signs of termites. Such signs include observing termites consuming the composition, tunnels left by termites, or any other signs known to indicate the presence of termites. Proper placement of the cartridge or cartridges is naturally important. A single cartridge may not be discovered by termites and therefore a plurality of cartridges are generally used in accordance with the present invention. Advantageously once the monitoring cartridges have been placed, they may be checked and rechecked until termite activity has been found. Indiscriminate use of pesticides is avoided because no pesticide or toxicant is used until termites have been located.

If termite presence is detected in the above method of monitoring for termites, the cartridge may be replaced with a second cartridge which includes a insecticide. The second cartridge preferably contains a slow-acting toxicant, insect growth regulator, or pathogen mixed with the monitoring composition and has an identical hole placement. By replacing the second cartridge exactly where the first had been and by having the identical (or nearly identical) hole placement, the tunnels in the soil or wooden beam leading to the cartridge are not disturbed. A slow-acting toxicant or pesticide is preferable because the termites gathering the food then bring the insecticide back to the colony and transfer it to colony members that have not fed directly at the bait, thus reducing the size of the colony.

In order to facilitate a further understanding of the invention, the following examples are presented primarily for the purpose of illustrating certain more specific details thereof. The invention is not to be deemed limited thereby except as defined in the claims.

EXAMPLE 1

Preparation of Monitoring Composition

9.5g of agar is dissolved in 750ml boiling water. The mixture is cooled to the point that it begins to gel.

The bark is removed from decayed white birch (Betula papyrifera). The wood is placed in a high powered blender with water in approximately a volume ratio of 1 part water to 3 parts wood. The wood and water are blended thoroughly until a uniform pulp material is achieved. The wet pulp is towel dried to remove excess liquid. The birch pulp is combined with the agar mixture in a 4:1 volumetric ratio (birch pulp to agar mixture). After combining the birch pulp and agar mixture uric acid is added in a wet weight ratio of one part uric acid to 99 parts birch pulp/agar mixture.

EXAMPLE 2

Preparation of Termiticide Composition

The diagnostic bait composition of Example 1 is prepared and 0.25% hydramethylnon, a delayed-action toxicant, is added to form the Termiticide Composition.

EXAMPLE 3

Field Comparison of Pine to Birch

Nineteen locations are selected to monitor for termite infestation. In each location pine stakes and decayed birch baits are placed in the ground to compare the response of termites to pine (the building material generally used in wooden houses) to birch (the wood used in the diagnostic bait composition of Example 1). Ten to seventy days later the stakes are checked for the degree to which they are utilized by termites.

This is done by estimating the number of termites at the bait to the nearest order of magnitude.

The results are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

<u>Location</u>	<u>Pine</u>	<u>Birch</u>
1	0	>1,000
2	0	>1,000
3	0	>1,000
4	0	>1,000
5	0	>1,000
6	≤10	>1,000
7	0	>1,000
8	≤10	>1,000
9	≤10	>1,000
10	0	>1,000
11	0	>1,000
12	0	> 100
13	≤10	> 100
14	0	> 100
15	0	> 100
16	0	>1,000
17	0	> 100
18	0	> 100
19	0	> 100

EXAMPLE 4

Nitrogen Supplementation

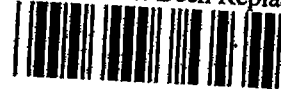
Two monitoring compositions are prepared in accordance with example 1 except that the second does not have any uric acid added. The compositions are placed in a petri dish with termites and observed to count the number of termites on each composition at different times. The results are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

<u>Day:</u>	<u>Observation time:</u> <u>(hr)</u>	<u># Termites on composition</u>		
		<u>N₂</u>	<u>+</u>	<u>-</u>
1	01:00	15		6
	02:00	4		7
	09:00	10		0
	19:00	10		1
	21:00	8		1
	22:00	7		1
	22:30	5		2
	23:00	6		0
	24:00	8		0
2	00:30	9		1
	01:00	8		0
	10:30	9		7
	11:00	8		12
	12:00	9		3
	13:30	15		8
	14:30	6		5
	15:30	5		4
	17:00	13		5
	18:00	10		4
	19:30	10		6
	20:00	8		4
	21:00	20		3
	22:00	12		3
	23:00	10		2
	24:00	15		9

Table 2 (cont.)

<u>Day:</u>	<u>Observation time:</u> <u>(hr)</u>	# Termites on composition		
		<u>N₂</u>	<u>+</u>	<u>-</u>
3	18:30	13		7
	19:00	10		8
	21:00	15		7
	22:00	13		8
	24:00	16		12
4	21:00	19		9
	22:00	27		9
5	21:00	12		4
	24:00	14		3
6	12:30	11		8
	14:30	6		5
	17:30	6		4
	22:00	10		6
7	10:00	8		3
	20:00	18		5
	22:30	15		2
	23:30	10		6
8	10:00	12		9
	22:00	10		4
9	10:00	12		5
	12:30	7		4
	20:00	13		5
	24:00	10		4
10	10:30	12		6
	20:00	13		5

EXAMPLE 5Secondary Kill

A group of 100 termites is allowed to feed at a toxic bait for 24 or 48 hours. The concentration of hydramethylnon is 0.5% and 2% in the replicates carried out. At the end of the 24 hour or 48 hour exposure period, 30 termites are removed from each group and placed in a new nest with 70 termites that have had no exposure to toxicant-containing food. Mortality is then recorded in these colonies. If cumulative mortality exceeds 30, it is evidence that the toxicant has been transferred from the exposed termites to the non-exposed termites by social food flow. That is, termites that have fed on toxic food regurgitate a portion of that food to other colony members. Therefore, termites are killed indirectly; all members of a colony do not need to feed directly at a toxicant-containing bait for control of the entire colony to be effective.

The results are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

SECONDARY KILL
Cumulative % Mortality

DAYS AFTER EXPOSURE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<u>TREATMENTS</u>										
A24 CONTROL	0	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	5
B24 2%	0	2	3	3	7	12	25	47	70	77
C24 2%	2	2	8	8	8	8	10	17	42	65
D24 .5%	0	5	5	5	8	8	10	12	12	15
E24 .5%	0	2	5	5	5	7	7	7	10	12

DAYS AFTER EXPOSURE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<u>TREATMENTS</u>										
A48 CONTROL	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	7
B48 2%	15	20	25	35	45	52	57	57	58	60
C48 2%	2	7	15	15	15	22	27	37	50	58
D48 .5%	0	10	22	23	23	23	23	25	28	33
E48 .5%	0	2	13	13	17	17	18	20	33	50

EXAMPLE 6

Control of Termites

Two monitoring compositions are made in accordance with Example 1 except that to the first is added 0.1% hydramethylnon and to the second is added 0.25% hydramethylnon. A third monitoring composition with no hydramethylnon acts as the control composition. These are separately employed to treat termite colonies consisting of 75, 100, and 100 termites respectively.

The results are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

<u>DAYS</u>	<u>Treatment .1%</u>		<u>Treatment .25%</u>		<u>Control</u>
	<u>MORTALITY</u>	<u>CUM.%</u>	<u>MORTALITY</u>	<u>CUM.%</u>	<u>MORTALITY</u>
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	0	0
5	3	4%	3	3%	0
6	0	4%	0	3%	0
7	0	4%	2	5%	0
8	0	4%	2	7%	0
9	0	4%	0	7%	0
10	0	4%	0	7%	0
11	1	5.3%	0	7%	0
12	0	5.3%	12	19%	0
13	0	5.3%	12	31%	0
14	7	14.6%	0	31%	0
15	4	20%	67	98%	0
16	5	26.7%	2	100%	0
17	15	46.7%	-	-	0
18	7	56%	-	-	0
19	10	69.3%	-	-	0
20	7	78.7%	-	-	0
21	5	85.3%	-	-	0
22	4	90.6%	-	-	0
23	7*	100%	-	-	0

* Because some termites die during the course of the experiment and are consumed by nestmates, all termites are counted at the end of the test. The number that have been consumed by nestmates is added to the final mortality count. One hundred percent of the termites were dead on day 23.

EXAMPLE 7

Termites from two locales are allowed to feed on the monitoring composition bait for a period of seven days. They are then offered a bait containing either 0.5% or 2% hydramethylnon, and the time course of mortality is followed. The results (Table 5) show that termites conditioned to feed on diagnostic bait do not discriminate against the same bait when hydramethylnon is added.

The results are listed in Table 5.

Table 5

REPLICATE 1

DAYS AFTER
EXPOSURE

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

TREATMENTS

A CONTROL	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5
B 2%HM	25	79	94	94	96	97	98	100	-	-	-	-
C 2%HM	27	67	84	84	87	89	91	92	93	95	100	-
D .5%HM	4	6	26	26	26	31	35	41	47	51	62	100
E .5%HM	0	0	4	4	9	14	15	19	24	29	39	100

REPLICATE 2

DAYS AFTER
EXPOSURE

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

TREATMENTS

A CONTROL	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
B 2%HM	8	20	51	51	51	54	59	63	65	66	100	-	-
C 2%HM	15	45	67	67	68	70	72	72	73	80	84	100	-
D .5%HM	3	12	24	24	25	27	27	32	36	40	50	50	99
E .5%HM	1	1	5	7	8	15	16	20	24	30	37	97	100

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What is claimed is:

1. A composition for monitoring for termites comprising about 30% to 90% of a cellulose source, about 0.25% to 5% of a nitrogen source utilizable by termites, about 10% to 60% water and 0% to about 1% of a suitable nutrient binding medium.
2. The monitoring composition according to claim 1 wherein the cellulose source comprises purified cellulose.
3. The monitoring composition according to claim 2 wherein the nitrogen source is uric acid and the nutrient binding medium is agar or an agar/water gel mixture.
4. The monitoring composition according to claim 2 comprising about 70% to 85% of the cellulose source, about 0.5% to 2% of the nitrogen source, and about 15% to 25% water.
5. The monitoring composition according to claim 4 wherein the cellulose source further comprises birch.
6. A method of monitoring for termites comprising placing a monitoring composition in a cartridge or other device, said cartridge or other device having at least one hole, in or near the locus of the suspected termite activity; and checking the cartridge for signs of termites.
7. A method of controlling termites comprising monitoring for termite infestation, said

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monitoring for termite infestation comprising placing a monitoring composition in a cartridge or other device, said cartridge or other device having at least one hole, in or near the locus of the suspected termite activity; and checking the cartridge for signs of termites; determining that termites are present; and replacing said first cartridge with a second cartridge containing a pesticide.

8. The method according to claim 7 wherein the monitoring composition is the composition described in claim 1.

9. The method according to claim 8 wherein the pesticide is a termiticide, insect growth regulator or pathogen.

10. The method according to claim 9 wherein the termiticide is hydramethylnon.