



## Termite Swarms

- During spring and summer termite alates will swarm from mature termite colony nests.
- Alates: winged reproductive termites have two wing pairs, double the body length. Bodies are slightly pigmented and are approximately 5-8mm long
- They swarm in large numbers – often hundreds of thousands.



**Mature *Coptotermes lacteus* termites (soldier and alates visible - these are a mound building termite).**

**These alates are much darker than many of the other species.**

- The swarming is triggered by a change in atmospheric pressure that comes following a hot day preceding rain or a thunderstorm. If there's no rain, they often go looking for water.



**Mature alates, drowned in a bird bath – probably *Coptotermes acinaciformis* or *Coptotermes frenchi*, the more common termites we encounter.**

- The alates are the new kings and queens that form new termite colony nests. Whilst they do feed on timber and cardboard items, initially they will only feed on very small amounts. It takes about three to five years before the colony is large enough to cause significant economic damage to structures.
- If someone sees this occurring, they should mark the area where the alates have swarmed from, collect samples of the termites in methylated spirits in a jar and notify our office. This information may help in locating and treating a termite nest.
- If the swarming has occurred from within the building and people have come home to it, there will be literally a carpet of wings on the floor and other surfaces. (The alates readily shed their wings and scurry away.)
- Don't panic, the existing colony often behaves a little erratically following a swarm. It is often advantageous to wait a few weeks before undertaking an inspection.
- The mature colony that has swarmed may continue doing this for up to approximately 50 years.
- Ants swarm too. Ants have three distinct body sections, elbowed antennae whereas termites have only two distinct body sections with beaded antennae. If unsure about ID, email a photo or send a sample to our office.



**Immature *Schedorhinotermes* sp. termite alate**