

# Pesticides and You

Vol. 6, No. 4  
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News From the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NCAMP)

*One in a series of NCAMP "How-To's"*

## Insuring That The House You Buy Is Not Contaminated

**Why do pesticide exterminators get involved when a building is purchased?**

When selling a building, the seller is generally required to provide to the lender certification from a pesticide exterminator that the structure is termite-free or has been treated for termites.

**What should a buyer be aware of?**

Due to the toxicity and persistence of pesticides generally used as termiticides, buyers should determine the levels of such chemicals in a building *prior to purchase*. Sales contracts can provide for an escape clause if air testing finds a dangerous level of pesticides in the building.

**Why should a buyer get involved in the certification/treatment question?**

It is critical that buyers maintain control over the pest management strategy used. To do this, buyers must write a clause into their contract/offer to buy to the effect that, "If termites are found in the home, control measures must be agreed upon to the satisfaction of the buyer. If not resolved to the buyer's satisfaction, this contract is cancelled." Work the exact wording out with your lawyer.

**What if there is termite damage?**

If evidence of structural termite damage exists, find out whether it is a current infestation and whether the building has ever been treated for termites, although this is not always possible to determine since record keeping is not mandatory. Retreatment, except on a spot treatment basis, of whole structures is illegal with some materials.

**If you find termites, what should you insist be done?**

Insist that the seller find a reliable pest control company that uses non-chemical approaches including structural or biological options (the electrogun or nematodes for example) where possible. If chemicals are used, spot treatment with the least toxic insecticide is effective. The seller should also contact the nearest Better Business Bureau and review court records on any litigation concerning the firm.

**What do you do if the seller does not respond to your requests?**

Remember, *make sure* your contract contains an escape clause.

Contact NCAMP for further information on termiticides and alternatives.

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