

Name _____



How Do Termites Reproduce?

Termites are small insects, but their ability to reproduce is essential for the survival of their colonies. Termite reproduction revolves around teamwork and the unique roles of certain members of the colony. Let's explore how termites grow their population and care for their young.

Mating Behavior

Reproduction begins with a special group of termites called reproductive termites, or alates. These termites have wings and leave their colony in large groups during a process called a nuptial flight. This happens during warm, humid evenings, often after rainfall. Male and female alates fly together, looking for a mate. Once they pair up, they shed their wings and find a suitable place to start a new colony.

The Queen and King

After mating, the male and female become the king and queen of the new colony. The queen begins laying eggs, starting with just a few but gradually increasing as the colony grows. Over time, a queen termite can lay thousands of eggs each day. She can live for over 20 years, continuously producing offspring.

Gestation Period and Offspring

The eggs laid by the queen hatch into tiny, pale termites called nymphs. The gestation period, or the time it takes for an egg to hatch, is typically two weeks. These nymphs grow into one of three types of termites: workers, soldiers, or reproductive alates, depending on the colony's needs.

Caring for the Young

Termites are social insects, and caring for their young is a team effort. Worker termites are responsible for feeding and grooming the nymphs. They chew wood or other plant material and turn it into a paste that the nymphs can easily digest. This nurturing behavior ensures that the young termites grow into healthy members of the colony.

Reproduction is the foundation of a termite colony's success. By working together to create and care for the next generation, termites ensure the survival of their species and maintain the balance of their ecosystem.