

WIDE AREA MANAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR THE SUBTERRANEAN TERMITE (*COPTOTERMES FORMOSANUS*), IN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, USA

ALAN MORGAN

Department of Entomology, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana , USA

Abstract The management of the Formosan subterranean termite, *Coptotermes formosanus*, is critical to the economic well-being of the United States. Estimates of property damage, repairs, and control measures exceed U.S. \$1 billion per year in the U.S., of which \$500 million is incurred in Louisiana. In 1998, the U.S. Congress recognized that the Formosan subterranean termite, *C. formosanus*, potentially could economically devastate areas of the country and appropriated funds to the United States Department of Agriculture to begin work on controlling and managing this pest. This initiative became known as "Operation Fullstop." Under Operation Fullstop, the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, in cooperation with USDA's Agricultural Research Service, began a large area pilot test in the New Orleans French Quarter. The program, which began in the summer of 1998, was designed to demonstrate the effectiveness of area-wide management of pests like the Formosan subterranean termite. Treatments included commercially available baits or non-repellent liquid termiticides. The goal of the program was to reduce densities of the Formosan termite and validate the effectiveness of area-wide management. Four years after the beginning of the program, data indicated that the population of the Formosan termite in the original 15-block area of the French Quarter program was being reduced, indicating to LSU Agricultural Center and ARS personnel that the program was working. It became evident, however, that the French Quarter program needed to be evaluated from the viewpoint of the participants of the study in order to assess their perceptions of the effectiveness of and their satisfaction with the program and to measure their knowledge of educational aspects of the program. Public evaluation is a part of USDA and LSU Ag Center programs and the results from an evaluation by the participants could help redirect if problems within the program were indicated. Assessing the perceptions of participants in the French Quarter Formosan Termite Program with respect to the importance and effectiveness of the program was the specific objective that guided the study. Using a researcher designed instrument, all 225 property owners and managers in the original 15-block area of the French Quarter Program were surveyed via U.S. mail with a 70.7% response rate. Data were analyzed using SPSS statistical analysis for social sciences. Based on results of the study, it was concluded that the overwhelming majority of the participants thought that the program was important, effective, and should be continued and expanded to other areas of the French Quarter. Knowledge scores derived from specific survey questions indicated that the participants were knowledgeable about termite biology, identification, prevention, control, and management. Therefore, based on the results of the study, continued research and educational efforts directed towards managing the Formosan subterranean termite would be justified.