Xterm termite bait – one year on

It is one year since the launch of the Xterm Termite Baiting and Monitoring system from Sumitomo Chemical Australia. With a full summer and winter under the belt, now is probably a good time to see what we've learnt.

There has been unanimously positive feedback on the design. The cartridge format is clearly a smart system, with installation being quick and mess free. It certainly looks more professional when installing in front of customers (no more mixing bait in a bucket!). A number of customers have found that the cartridge can be attached to feeding sites without the bait station and still get great results. This is particularly useful when trying to bait in small or awkward spots.

The in-ground monitoring stations have been a winner too, with their in-built ant bait station, keeping ants out of the monitoring station has never been easier. As **Brodie Hudson** from Customised Pest Control in Adelaide states, "The in-ground system we installed is easy to inspect and easy to maintain. With the hidden ant bait station within the lid, getting rid of unwanted ants is easy."

Dead *Coptotermes* in bait canister.

Coptotermes feeding in Xterm IG bait canister.

So it looks good and is easy to install, but how did it perform against the termite species across Australia? As **Garry Webb**, head of Sumitomo Chemical Environmental Health and Professional Products mentioned, "You're always nervous when you launch a new termite product, no matter how much data and confidence you have. The true test of a product is when it is used by a large number of pest control professionals, under a wide range of conditions, against all the key termite species. But the feedback we have received has been excellent."

The performance against *Coptotermes* in particular has been outstanding. "We always flag in our training presentation that the performance of Xterm can sometimes be faster than other baits on the market and termites will definitely eat less Xterm than other products due to its high active loading," said Mr Webb. The feedback from customers supports this. As Mr Hudson recalls, "We have seen the complete eradication of *Coptotermes* within 3-4 weeks and with only two bait cartridges. *Heterotermes* have also been eliminated quicker than we have achieved previously and after consuming only one bait cartridge."

Performance on *Schedorhinotermes* has also been positive. **Allan Day** from Magnum Pest Control on the Gold Coast was one of the first companies to start using Xterm. "Our company started using Xterm on a very difficult commercial job in Southport with *Schedorhinotermes* present. Above ground stations were installed on 6th September by taping the stations onto walls that were very fragile due to termite activity. Installing larger type stations would not have been possible and this is where the Xterm station proved to be brilliant. Within five weeks, four cartridges had been eaten and termite activity had ceased. A fantastic result achieved for us and the consumer."

Although performance during the summer is often achieved in one to two months, normally after consuming between one and two bait cartridges, baiting performance over winter has been similar to other baiting systems on the market. It's worth remembering that colder weather brings about changes in termite physiology (reduced energy requirements, no moulting), reduced feeding (although they may still take a lot of bait back to the nest) and reduced brood in the colony, all of which means baits take longer to work over winter. Even if they take bait over winter, the bait effect only really kicks in when the weather warms up in spring. "With the great performance our customers were obtaining over summer, this came as a bit of disappointment to some of them, but all appreciated the important understanding of the winter behaviour of termites.

"We'd be lying if we said we didn't have a few calls about termites not feeding on the bait. Those of us who've been doing termite baiting for long enough know that 'termites are termites' – no matter what bait you use, sometimes they just do their own thing, and for whatever reason, they decide to give your bait a miss." Fortunately that has been a rare occurrence, with most of the cases of non-feeding having been due to incorrect installation. The most common installation errors have been:

- poor bait placement (very important to place the bait at the feeding front)
- not moistening the above ground bait prior to installation
- not using the 'lure bottle' to connect the feeding site to the bait station.

On visiting such sites and re-installing the bait correctly, feeding has been achieved. "Xterm is a little different to other systems on the market in terms of installation and performance. So it's always worth attending one of our training sessions," said Mr Webb.

Schedorhinotermes feeding in Xterm AG bait canister.

In addition to face-to-face sessions, Sumitomo are now running four online Xterm training webinars each month. The feedback on these sessions has been very positive and has been particularly well received from those businesses located away from the main cities that rarely get the opportunity to attend training sessions.

So one year on, the performance of Xterm is certainly delivering on expectations and the overall flexibility of the system, including the absence of contract and site fees, which has been very well received by pest professionals. With over 250 companies now accredited and already using Xterm, more than a few professionals are seeing the benefits of Xterm.

Nasutitermes feeding in Xterm IG bait canister.

Coptotermes in Xterm IG station.