



We're BACK!

One company's story about
how they re-entered the termite
market after a 19-year absence.

Cooper Pest Solutions' Jim Adamo with the
hand-held computer for the TermAware system.

After a 19-year hiatus from the termite industry, Phil and Rick Cooper, owners of Cooper Pest Solutions, Lawrenceville, N.J., saw opportunity knocking at their door and seized the moment. With technological advancements in the termite industry that are nothing short of staggering, there are a host of new opportunities in the pest management industry.

The impetus for Cooper's new services started in the mid-1990s and continues to evolve. It started when Dow AgroSciences introduced the Sentricon® system. Since that time momentum has continued to build with several manufacturers bringing highly effective products to the marketplace. Today, the variety of tools available to companies that provide termite management services are described by many as the most effective products that the pest management industry has ever seen. The best part is that there is not just one effective product, there are numerous options with more on the way, the Cooper brothers say. Couple this with advancements in communications and technology and you have the makings of the

most effective and consumer-friendly termite management programs, Phil Cooper, president of Cooper Pest Solutions, said.

With a new product line, the company is embracing this new technology, and the opportunities that come with it. "Today's consumers are demanding more than the traditional method of treating the home, and performing an annual re-inspection for termites," said Phil Cooper. "The consumer is realizing that technology has surpassed this old approach and they expect their termite company to progress with the times." Cooper Pest Solutions was excited to launch back into the termite industry with its newest program called TermAware™. "TermAware takes advantage of the most effective line of products this industry has ever seen," Phil Cooper said.

But it doesn't stop with the treatments. Cooper Pest Solutions also has integrated an ongoing monitoring system equipped with bar coding and has tied it into a consumer section on the company's Web site so clients can check the status of their service shortly after it has been completed. The program is now in its third year.

ALONG TIME COMING. Cooper, like many companies in the industry, opted to leave the termite industry in the mid-1980s. "For years, chlordane had been a well trusted, and dependable product for the control of termites, however, following the ban of chlordane, the products that remained simply didn't compare," said Rick Cooper, Cooper Pest Solutions' technical director. "The loss of chlordane, coupled with the rising rate of claims industry wide, was enough to encourage my father to make the decision to leave the termite industry and stick primarily to general pest control." The decision to leave the termite industry was a big one for the Cooper organization in 1983 because at that time, termite work accounted for 50 percent of the company's annual revenues.

Phil Cooper said he remembers getting the itch to re-enter the marketplace around 1997 when baiting programs had begun to take the industry by storm. "I recall watching the success that some of the most well respected firms in the country were having with Sentricon and continually asking Rick if the time was right to go back in," he said. However a re-entry into the termite marketplace would not come until Rick, the company's technical director, was satisfied that enough products existed to deliver effective termite management on a consistent basis.

"I wasn't sure that day would ever come," Phil Cooper said. "Anyone who knows Rick will tell you he is a very detail-oriented person and I began to believe that he would never be



Patrick O'Gara of Cooper Pest Solutions performing a termite inspection.

satisfied with the products that were becoming available." Although he was not yet convinced that the time was right, Rick, a research-based entomologist, began working with the new baiting technology in the field. "I was very impressed by Sentricon, the concept of baits was a good fit for our company, environmentally friendly and very effective," he said.

As bait technology continued to improve, Rick became increasingly impressed with the new method of termite control. "Even though we were comfortable with the termite baits, I was not prepared to offer termite services based upon the effectiveness of a single product line," he said. Then along came non-repellent liquid termiticides. According to Rick, this changed everything. One of the greatest limitations of previous liquid termiticides was the fact that they were all repellent, he said. For the first time since chlordane, the industry had two non-repellent products. "This is a very exciting time in our industry," Rick said. "We have tremendous chemistry available and more on the way."

"I can still remember the day, during one of our regular meetings, I asked Rick the question that I had asked so many times before. My jaw dropped, when he answered with a confident 'Yes!' I couldn't believe it," Phil said.

From the day Rick Cooper gave the green light for the company to re-enter the termite control market, countless hours were funneled into creating a termite program that they would be proud to offer their clients. "Our termite program which we would later name, TermAware was modeled after the most innovative termite services in the country," Phil said.

The Coopers knew they had a dynamite program but like any good service they needed the right personnel to back it up. The company hired Chris O'Donovan, a chemistry major from Rutgers University,

in 2000. O'Donovan served as Rick's right-hand man in all of the field work that he was doing with the baiting system. He gained valuable insight into the newest technology available and learned the intricacies of successfully implementing baiting programs for termites.

Despite his progress with Sentricon, O'Donovan was not familiar with the hands-on application of conventional termite control. Enter Alan Smith. Smith, an entomologist and 25-year termite veteran from Indiana, was looking to relocate to the New Jersey/Eastern Pennsylvania area and a match was in the making. Smith also brought with him a long history of teaching in the Purdue University Termite Program and he was the perfect mentor for O'Donovan.

With all the pieces in place, the task turned to creating the product mix and marketing plan for the rapidly approaching swarm season to launch their new program. Cooper Pest Solutions officially re-opened the doors of their termite division in the spring of 2002 after a nearly a 20-year departure.

TERMAWARE IS UNVEILED. As the business model developed, the Coopers knew that their program would be centered on the development of ongoing perpetual business. In Cooper's business philosophy the program should have frequent visits to the home along with a billing program that occurred periodically throughout the year. Cooper wanted the termite program to be in consumers' minds year round.

Designing a program that was flexible but provided a sound technology was essential. The Cooper brothers met with manufacturers, many of the leading industry consultants and had many hours of conversations with their friends throughout the industry. "Our list of people we spoke to in creating our strategic plan is a who's who of the industry," Phil Cooper said. Countless hours were spent understanding the dynamics of the marketplace and the different products that were being offered.

The Coopers decided they wanted a termite solution that was their own. "So we set about creating TermAware, a program in the image of Cooper, only to be offered by Cooper. We believe partnerships with manufacturers are important," Phil said, "however, we also wanted our program to have flexibility to adapt and change with this ever-changing market of monitoring and termite detection systems."

"TermAware integrates the monitoring we believe to be the best, along with barcoding technology to provide the client with online access to what is happening at their home. Coupled with the ongoing



The TermAware station.

commitment to the client for termite coverage for their home and we had a program which was perfect for our marketplace," Phil said.

The service, aimed mostly at residential accounts, provides for treatment of termites if they appear but is aimed at the client who wants to know what is happening around their structure. "We knew from the get go that our program catered to a specific niche in the termite market," Phil Cooper said. "We were introducing a premium product that nobody else offered into a market where price was often an issue among consumers. This was coupled with re-educating our client base that we were back in the termite business. This created a host of challenges and at the same time many opportunities.

A major aspect in the positioning of TermAware is its basis on science. A key to the system is the frequency of monitors, which with in TermAware is every 10 feet around the perimeter of the structure. "The 10-foot spacing is critical to our program," Rick Cooper said. "Many other termite monitoring programs have fewer monitors installed. Every structure we do gets at least

a 10-foot spacing of monitors which increases the likelihood of finding termites if they are nearby."

Phil Cooper said the TermAware solution costs more but he is comfortable with the product's position in the marketplace. "TermAware is higher priced than some of our competitors' (products) but it is due to the number of monitors we install. Our goal is to find termites if they are present and to do this we need the frequency of the monitors. The bottom line to a TermAware customer is to protect their home and if that means an increased cost for the increased likelihood of finding termites, well they see the correlation in value."


Cooper Termite Solutions also adds more value with its trademarked "Just a Click Away" service. Just A Click Away provides the TermAware client with online access to their entire program. By barcoding the monitors and tracking activity through handheld computers, "Just A Click Away" is online to the clients within 24 hours of each inspection. "As we developed TermAware we kept coming back to the strengths of today's technology and our clients' thirst for information," Phil Cooper said. "Just marketing 'Just a Click Away' positions Cooper as a leading edge technology-rich company which integrates perfectly with the TermAware service."

To support TermAware, Cooper Termite Solutions also offers curative treatments utilizing non-repellants or Sentricon. "Many of our potential termite customers are aware of their options before we even walk through the door," said Chris O'Donovan, Cooper's termite division manager. "The Internet houses thousands of pages of information on the biology of termites, termite control, treatment methods and prod-



Jim Adamo checking the termite bait system.

ucts, so information is readily available at their fingertips. They ask for specific products by name."

A few years after the initial launch, Cooper Pest Solutions is now seeing that all the hard work and planning paid off. Increasing numbers of customers are embracing the concept of termite monitoring, and the future is bright. The division expects triple digit growth this year along with an ever-growing bottom line. With the continuing advancement of technology the Coopers say they expect the TermAware program to continue to evolve. "The beauty of our system, is that it is ours," Phil Cooper said. "We can tweak TermAware to take advantage of the latest and greatest breakthroughs in the termite industry. And that is exactly what we intend to do. I suspect that the foundation of TermAware will be the same five years from now but our clients will all have the advantage of the latest breakthroughs. Ultimately our system brings our clients peace of mind." 



Corporate Headquarters:
351 Lawrence Station Road
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

1-800-949-2667
www.cooperpest.com

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