

## Debunking the Termite-Infested Mulch Myth

There is an email making the rounds, warning of mulch coming from hurricane-damaged areas of the south containing termites:

If you use mulch around your house be very careful about buying mulch this year. After the Hurricane in New Orleans many trees were blown over. These trees were then turned into mulch and the state is trying to get rid of tons and tons of this mulch to any state or company who will come and haul it away. So it will be showing up in Home Depot and Lowes at dirt cheap prices with one huge problem; Formosan Termites will be the bonus in many of those bags. New Orleans is one of the few areas in the country where the Formosan Termites has gotten a strong hold and most of the trees blown down were already badly infested with those termites. Now we may have the worst case of transporting a problem to all parts of the country that we have ever had. These termites can eat a house in no time at all and we have no good control against them, so tell your friends that own homes to avoid cheap mulch and know where it came from.

**Please be aware that this is just an urban myth** – there is no potential of infestation in Wisconsin from Formosan termites from mulch for several reasons:

1. Formosan termites are subterranean species and most likely would not survive the chipping process;
2. These termites cannot survive the cold winters this far north;
3. All wood products are quarantined from the infested parishes, so they can't end up in mulch unless treated (see Texas press release below).

Agriculture & Forestry Today with Commissioner Bob Odom

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Don't believe everything you read on the Internet.

That is the message Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry Bob Odom is stressing to the public as an email rumor about Formosan termite-infested mulch is circling the globe.

The email warns consumers not to purchase "cheap" wood mulch at major home improvement chains because it may be infested with Formosan termites.

"The email is not accurate and doesn't even mention the quarantines this department put in place last fall to keep Formosan termites from spreading," Odom said. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry issued quarantines following the hurricanes for woody debris in Cameron, Calcasieu, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa and Washington parishes. Woody debris cannot be moved out of these areas without first submitting a plan for treatment to the department.

"I've had my people out looking into these claims to make sure there are no violations of the quarantine. I've also had our invasive pest expert contact the stores mentioned in the email and we've yet to find any validity to the claims in the email," Odom said.

"In my opinion, someone is using the Internet to cause hysteria about a problem that doesn't really exist. If there are people out there who know about someone violating the quarantines, then they need to report it to us. We'll shut the culprits down real quick but it has to be reported," Odom said. "I think the quarantines doing the job, though. We've worked with the debris contractors, the Corps of Engineers and FEMA to handle the debris and quarantines."

To report a quarantine violation, call (225) 925-3763.