

Coconut termite (116)

Summary

- Narrow distribution. Known only from the central Pacific. On coconuts, but also stilt roots of *Pandanus*. An important pest.
- After the nuptial flight, the queen lays eggs, producing workers and a few soldiers. Once the colony is established, it begins hollowing out the centre of the palm; this makes it likely to snap off in the wind.
- Characteristic grooves covered with frass and wood are made in the "bark" for reasons unknown.
- Cultural control: dig out and burn palms as soon as net-like grooves are seen.
- Chemical control: not appropriate for this pest; the chemicals might contaminate the fresh water lens.

Common Name

Coconut termite

Scientific Name

Neotermes rainbowi. A related termite, *Neotermes samoanus*, is present in Samoa.



Photo 1. Winged adult and worker termites, *Neotermes rainbowi*.



Photo 2. Coconut termite, *Neotermes rainbowi*, soldier and worker.



Photo 4. Attack by the coconut termite, *Neotermes rainbowi*, has produced the characteristic grooves in the trunk, destruction of internal tissues and death of the palm.



Photo 3. Characteristic grooves in the trunk of a coconut palm made by the coconut termite, *Neotermes rainbowi*.

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Information from Waterhouse DF (1993) *Neotermes rainbowi* (Hill). *Biological Control Pacific Prospects - Supplement 2*. ACIAR Monograph No. 20. Brown Prior Anderson, Burwood, Victoria; and from CABI (2019) *Neotermes rainbowi* (coconut termite). *Crop Protection Compendium*. Photos 1-4 Gerald McCormak, Cook Island Biodiversity & Natural Heritage. (<http://cookislands.bishopmuseum.org/>).

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