Oil and ash to protect grain barns from termites

Recognize the problem
Termites (lumoma in Tonga) are ½ to 2 cm wingless insects and some are even bigger. They have big heads with pincer-like mouthparts and a big abdomen. Termites eat wooden structures so they can destroy grain barns. They are also pests of various crops at almost all growth stages. In the case of maize, termites are destructive when the crop has matured and stalks have dried up. Termites also destroy the maize in the barn. Termites eat tunnel-like patterns which start where the ground meets the wood or crop and go upwards or sideways. These tunnels will often be covered with dry soil round about them.

Background
Termites can eat a lot of wood and crops because they live in colonies of many hundreds, even thousands. Termites cannot fly and must crawl up the wood or crops. Engine oil contains substances which repel termites. Similarly, wood ash repels termites when applied to the wood. Therefore, used engine oil or ash can be applied on the storage structures to safe guard the structures and grains.

Management
The farmer can decide to use either ash mixture or engine oil.

Ash mixture
- Get ash and add clean water to make the ash mixture
- The ash mixture should be thick and sticky
- Paint the ash mixture over the pole stands of the storage structure and the outer ring of the wooden floor
- The ash mixture can also be sprinkled around the barn walls close to the poles

Used engine oils
- Get used engine oil from vehicles, local machinery services, or other sources
- Paint the oil over the pole stands of the storage structure and the outer ring of the wooden floor. Wear at least mask and gloves.

Scientific name(s) > Cryptotermes ssp.

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe

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Edited by Plantwise.

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