

How to choose a pest controller

What a general spray and a termite treatment should cost, and why the biggest Tasmanian risk is often the scare-selling, not the pest

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Tasmania is the one Australian state generally regarded as free of the termites that destroy buildings, and yet mainland-style termite baiting and annual "termite risk" packages are still sold here. The real local problems are European wasps, rodents, spiders and ants - and the businesses that handle them range from a licensed operator holding a Commercial Operator Licence to a person with a spray pack and no paperwork.

What it should cost

A general internal and external pest spray for a standard three-bedroom home typically runs \$150 to \$350; a cockroach treatment \$100 to \$250; rodent control \$200 to \$450. Wasp nest removal is usually \$100 to \$250 depending on access. A termite inspection, where one is genuinely wanted, is around \$200 to \$500, while establishment-style termite barriers and baiting systems run into the thousands.

Servicing contracts and annual programs are where the price climbs, so ask what each visit actually treats and what the whole year costs, not just the first visit. One point worth knowing before you buy any termite product: Tasmania is generally regarded as free of the termites that seriously damage buildings, because the destructive *Coptotermes* genus is absent from the state. That does not mean you can ignore pests - it means an annual termite baiting or barrier program sold to a Tasmanian homeowner is often a mainland product transplanted here, and a termite inspection that finds nothing is not a reason to spend thousands on a barrier.

What the law requires

Any Tasmanian business that uses agricultural or veterinary chemical products to control pests for a fee must hold a Commercial Operator Licence, issued through the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, and the individuals applying the chemicals must hold an appropriate Certificate of Competency for that type of work. This is a business-and-worker licensing regime, not a formality: operating without it is an offence with penalties.

Ask for both - the business's Commercial Operator Licence and the technician's Certificate of Competency. Note that this regulator is separate from the building-trade regulator, so a "licensed" claim should specify which licence. If a company only talks about a council registration or an industry membership, that is not the same thing as holding the state licence.

Red flags

Leads with termites as your main risk without any evidence of termite activity.

Cannot produce a Commercial Operator Licence or a technician's Certificate of Competency.

Quotes a price before coming to the property or asking what the problem actually is.

Sells a fixed annual program of visits regardless of what is found.

No written list of what was treated, with what, and when it is safe to re-enter.

Pressure to sign a multi-year termite contract on the spot.

What good looks like

Asks what you have actually seen or heard before quoting.

Names the licence and the certificate without being pushed.

Tells you plainly when a problem does not justify a treatment or a contract.

Gives a written service record with the products used and the re-entry times.

Honours a warranty on the work rather than just selling the next visit.

What to ask

- "What is your Commercial Operator Licence number, and the technician's Certificate of Competency?"
- "What pests are actually active on my property, and how did you determine that?"
- "For a general spray, what will you treat inside and out, and how long is the warranty?"
- "Are you recommending a termite barrier because you found termite activity, or as a general product?"
- "How often do you want to return, what does each visit treat, and what is the annual cost?"
- "Which chemicals will you apply, and what is the re-entry time for children and pets?"
- "What happens if the wasps or the mice come back during the warranty period?"

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