



# The Aardwolf

- Name : **Proteles Cristatus**
- Family : **Hyena / Pretelidae**
- Description : **Body is covered with long, coarse hair and soft underfur, five toes on its forefoot**
- Height : **45 to 50 cm at shoulder**
- Length : **70 to 80 cm**
- Weight : **7 to 12 kg**

**A**RDWOLF is a mammal of southern and eastern Africa, surviving mainly on an insectivorous diet (preferring termites and insect larvae). The name in Afrikaans means "earth wolf" ("aarde" is earth).

Being nocturnal and elusive, the aardwolf is rarely observed. It is a solitary forager which locates its prey primarily by sound, at night. With weak jaws and small, stubby teeth, the aardwolf must use its sharp canines to fight off their enemies such as dogs. When attacked, the aardwolf erects its mane, giving it a formidable appearance. It also ejects a foul-smelling fluid from its anal glands.

Towards December, the female aardwolf finds a burrow and bears a litter of between one and five.

The economic importance of the aardwolf and other insectivorous

animals like the aardvark (meaning "earth pig" in Afrikaans) is measured by their control of termites. In areas where these mammals have been exterminated, crops suffer extensive damage.

Given the environmental-friendliness of the aardwolf, it is most appropriate that a company that solves pest problems should take on this name. And because it uses the latest and safest techniques to take care of pest problems, "PESTKARE" (pronounced as pest-care) is added. The "K" is not a spelling mistake. It is to signify "take care" with a "knock them down" purpose.

Source: Microsoft® Encarta (Microsoft Corporation, Funk & Wagnalls Corporation) Encyclopedia of Animals, MAMMALS (Merehurst Press)

## Getting to know... TERMITES

### ✓ **Termites actually help maintain an ecological balance.**

As scavengers they break down fallen trees into nutrients for the other living plants. Unfortunately, they cannot distinguish between the jungle and man's habitat. As a result, they are the single most damaging pest in Singapore, causing millions of dollars of repairs to timber structures and furniture.

✓ **They are often called 'white ants'.** Termites resemble ants and their bodies tend to be pale. However they are actually more related to the cockroaches than any other insect.

✓ **Of the three types, the Subterranean Termites are the most common.** The other two are Drywood and Dampwood Termites.

✓ **Termites are social insects.** They live in large colonies – a caste system of workers, soldiers and reproductives (including the king and queen termites).

✓ **Termites feed on cellulose found in timber and wood-based products.** If left unchecked, they can wreck havoc in timber structures and furniture of buildings. In their tireless search for food, they embark on exploratory feeding thus damaging electrical wirings and conduits, even though these do not contain cellulose.



An established Subterranean Termite colony, nesting 5 queens, numerous kings, soldiers, workers and nymphs.

✓ **A mature Subterranean Termite nest contains millions of residents.** The queen termite, with the cooperation of the king termite, is like an egg-laying machine, producing as many as 20,000 eggs per day - and she lives for up to 20 years.

✓ **Subterranean worker termites are the true culprits.** They digest cellulose in timber with the aid of special organisms (protozoans) in their guts. They then secrete food materials from their mouths and anuses which they use to feed the soldiers and reproductives. Worker termites build mud-tubes (similar to our MRT) that lead them safely from their nest located in the soil to the timber structures on which they feed.

✓ **Soldier termites defend the colony from their common enemy, the ants.** In

an established colony, they will make clicking sounds if you disturb their activity. Heard clearly at night, this sound is made by knocking their large mandibles (jaws) on the timber structure.

✓ **The reproductives 'swarm' when the atmosphere is humid.** In order to improve the colony's chances of survival, the reproductives 'swarm' just before the rains. They can be often seen flying around lighted bulbs and they can be a nuisance at dinner time.

### Termites Survival Behaviour

- There is no cemetery, the dead are eaten by the living.
- In prolonged drought, eggs and nymphs are eaten.
- Termites lick one another to groom / sanitise (equivalent to us bathing!) and eat the fatty exudation.
- If the queen termite's fertility wanes, workers lick her to death and then she is eaten.
- If the ground water-table rises, the nest activities move upwards.