

HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR HOME

Small issues can quickly turn into major problems if the proper steps are not taken to maintain your home. Here are some of the common home maintenance problems you might encounter as a home owner and how to avoid them.

How can you prevent roof leaks?

Although some cases of roof leaks are caused by defective building work, most of the time they are caused by a lack of maintenance and cleaning.

Cleaning regularly (and at least once a year before the wet season) will prevent fallen leaves and other debris from building up on roofs, which can block and corrode gutters and downpipes.

This may cause leaks into the house (ceilings, walls and floors) and dampness may attract termites which cause further damage.

How can you manage termites?

Termites attack buildings made of timber, steel, concrete or brickwork. Termites work fast and can cause serious and costly damage to your home, even before anyone is aware of their presence.

Some buildings have physical termite barrier systems installed to help prevent termite penetration. Chemical termite treatments can also be applied periodically to prevent damage.

Tips for preventing termite attacks:

- Have a suitably licensed person inspect your home every 12 months (or every three months if located in a high-risk area).
- Regularly check for early signs of termite activity, including earth tubes, veins or a gallery of tubes running up the side of your home. Check for soil disturbance around cracks or gaps in the area.
- Check surrounding trees, stumps or timber-sleeper walls as termites can nest in these areas.
- Keep wood and garden mulch beds away from the outside of your home. Ensure any 'weepholes' (the small ventilation hole in-between two bricks, near the ground) do not end up below soil level.

- Ensure timber floors, pergolas, verandas and steps are not in contact with the ground.
- For stumps or brick piers, regularly inspect ant caps (the metal sheet that protrudes horizontally beyond the sides of the post) for earth tubes that may have been built around the ant cap into the building.
- Check the damp areas around your building, e.g. around taps, hot water systems and air-conditioning units for early signs of termite activity.

Before buying a new home:

Before you make a major investment in a new home, make sure that there aren't hidden problems such as termite infestations.

Just because a building looks well maintained doesn't mean it's free from termites. Also, termite resistant building materials (such as concrete floors) will not always prevent termite attack.

Here are steps for checking termite activity:

- Arrange a building inspection report on the condition of the building, focusing on the termite barrier system and any signs of dampness.
- Arrange a termite inspection report on past or present termite activity.
- Find out when the building was last treated to prevent termite attack and when the next treatment is due.
- Understand the level of risk the building has against termite attack and how to prevent future damage.

Find out more about how to deal with termites by reading the relevant fact sheet or searching on our website.

How should you maintain timber decks?

Engage a QBCC-licensed builder or pre-purchase building inspector/engineer to inspect your timber deck. Alternatively, check with a timber expert on what maintenance is recommended, considering the climate and its location.

Timber decks are often painted or oiled. In tropical areas, decks may need re-coating every six to 12 months. Always follow the maintenance guidelines set out by your builder and the paint or coating manufacturer.

How can you reduce the effects of subsidence?

Soil type, location and the water content of soils can cause building foundations to move. This is known as heaving or subsidence.

Tree roots may also contribute to subsidence by interfering with the building structure or changing the soil moisture content near building footings.

Cutting down a well-established tree next to your home could create a subsidence problem. Conversely, planting a tree next to the building can take up a lot of ground water and cause subsidence when fully grown.

A well landscaped garden will direct rainwater away from the building, ensuring water does not pool near the footings.

Find out more about how to maintain your footings by reading the relevant fact sheet or searching on our website.

What about sealed driveways and pathways?

To maintain sealed driveways and paths, some manufacturers recommend re-sealing on an annual basis. For best results, homeowners should only clean sealed concrete with products recommended by the manufacturer.

What you should be aware of when renovating yourself

Avoid changing any essential building elements when renovating your home.

For example, protect the existing termite barrier system from new additions or new garden beds. Do not introduce excessive weight onto plasterboard ceilings from insulation, air conditioning or electrical work. If you share a fire separating wall with your neighbour, ensure that the TV, internet or electrical wires do not penetrate the fire wall barrier.

If you wish to make any significant structural changes to your home, you should first check with a QBCC-licensed builder.

Need more information?

Visit www.qbcc.qld.gov.au or call QBCC on 139 333 for advice about building work.

For advice on specific maintenance issues, please contact your builder or product manufacturer.