

FEEDING HABITS OF THE UP COUNTRY LIVE WOOD  
TERMITE, POSTELECTROTERMES MILITARIS DESNEUX  
(ISOPTERA:KALOTERMITIDES), IN  
DIFFERENT CASTE COMBINATIONS.

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The up country live wood termite, Postelectroterms militaris Desneux, is a serious insect pest of tea in the Maskeliya and Dimbula planting districts. There is no information on the feeding habits of this termit. The following 10 combinations were observed for their feeding habits at regular intervals, in five replicates: (a) eggs only, (b) eggs and workers, (c) larvae only, (d) larvae and workers, (e) soldiers only, (f) soldiers & workers, (g) neotenics only, (h) neotenics & workers, (i) workers only, and (j) larvae, workers, neotenics and soldiers.

This study revealed the following: (1) Larvae, soldiers and neotenics do not feed by themselves, but fed by the workers. (2) Survival of larvae, soldiers and neotenics when kept alone is significantly less than when kept along with the workers. (3) Survival (in ascending order), soldiers, neotenics, larvae, workers, (4) Workers feed less when kept alone than when kept along with other castes. (5) There is strong evidence of cannibalism/necrophagy by workers on other castes including workers; (6) Feeding preference (in order of merit): Larvae, workers, soldiers, neotenics. These findings become useful to estimate the fluctuations among the termit castes & the colony size in infested tea plants, over a period of time.