NEWCASTLE·UNDER·LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

Pest Control Information Sheet

Anobium punctatum
Furniture Beetle : Woodworm

The Council's Pest Control Officers Do NOT provide a treatment service for woodworm and other timber pests, and **we cannot provide specific detailed advice on this subject**. The information contained in this document is provided by the National Pest Technicians Association. Woodworm control is not a treatment that can usually be attempted on a DIY basis as it may require chemicals only available to professions. If structural timbers are affected they may need to be checked by a structural engineer and possibly even replaced.

Size: 3-5mm overall body length.

Markings

Adults mid-brown in colour, but not shiny. Larval stages are white/straw coloured.

Location

Timber, both in the wild and in construction/furniture etc. Visual sightings of adults. 'Sawdust on the floor under exit holes. Use of pheromone `Anobid' traps.

The furniture beetle, also known as woodworm or the woodworm beetle, is widespread throughout Europe, including the UK. Originally a `wild' species found in dead and fallen timbers. It is widespread outside, attacking window and doorframes and wooden posts. Like many insects it has adapted to the human environment, and has become a pest of timbers in houses, planes and boats.

Biology

It is typical to see the adult stages from Easter into early summer, when they emerge and take to the wing for mating. About 30 or so eggs are laid in cracks and crevices on the wood from which the female has emerged or onto the end grain of sawn timber. It has been known for the adult emergence holes to be re used for egg laying. Depending on temperature, the eggs hatch in two to four weeks. The young larval stages burrow straight down into the wood for protection and food. If the tunnels are examined, they will be random in pattern, although they often follow the line of the grain. Furniture beetle will attack both soft and hardwoods, but it is mainly the 'sapwood' that is attacked.

Development to adult depends on timber type and temperature, but takes at least two years in buildings, and can often take much longer. The final stage (final instar) larvae burrow towards the surface, but do not emerge. Instead, they construct a pupation chamber just below the surface. After pupation, the new adult emerges by biting the cap off this chamber, leaving the typical 'woodworm hole' of about 2-3mm diameter.

Reasons for Control

The furniture beetle is an important and serious pest of timbers, both structural and decorative. In addition, it attacks furniture and other wooden goods. Varnished or polished woods are not usually attacked, but the infestation may have arisen before the item was made, and even the best furniture has joints and unfinished areas such as drawer backs and bases.

Obviously, the visible signs of woodworm activity can ruin wooden items (although some antiques are enhanced by signs of historical furniture beetle activity). Where structural timbers are affected, serious weakening can occur, resulting in expensive repair work or even demolition.

Treatment

To check if an infestation is current, or whether the holes are from a long-dead problem, look on the floor or under the item. You may be able to see evidence of the emergence of the adult beetles - fine saw-dust that is ejected from the hole as the beetle climbs out after pupation. If no dust is present, then the use of pheromone traps, known as Anobid traps, may help to prove the activity is current.

The pheromone trap is located adjacent to the suspect item, and will detect the presence of the male adult furniture beetles by using the concentrated sex pheromone of the female beetle. These traps have a short period when they can be used (around the time the beetles emerge) and so the timing of their placement is vitally important.

Infested items can be professionally treated using a proprietary woodworm fluid. There are many products on the market, most require specialist training before use.

Some companies advocate the use of a space spray. such as an ultra low volume (ULV) application, to supplement the insecticidal treatment, as this has the advantage of getting into all the nooks and crannies. Whilst this will kill adult beetles, it will have little effect on a long-term infestation inside a piece of wood.

Selecting a Contractor

Woodworm treatment is a specialist treatment, which should be undertaken only by a competent contractor. They should be capable of identifying what damage may have been caused to structural timbers, be aware of the range of chemicals available and how they could be safely used in your specific circumstances and be able to access the expertise of a structural engineer to confirm the most appropriate action to take.

Reputable contractors will often provide a 20-30 year insurance backed guarantee for their work. Your buildings insurer or mortgage lender may require evidence that work has been professionally undertaken and guaranteed.

The trade association which represents and sets voluntary standards for registered contractors working this type of pest control is:

The British Wood Preserving & Damp-Proofing Association
1 Gleneagles House
Vernongate
Derby DE1 1UP

Telephone: 01332 225100
Fax: 01332 225101
E-mail info@bwpda.co.uk

Acknowledgements:
Text Source: National Pest Technicians Association - http://www.npta.org.uk/furniture_beetle.htm
Image NSW Agriculture: http://www.ento.csiro.au/aicn/name_s/b_216.htm

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Civic Offices
Merrial Street
Newcastle
Staffs
ST5 2AG

Telephone
01782 742590
email
pestcontrol@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

April 2009