



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 through site visits**. The information contained in this document is provided by the National Pest Technicians Association, and the British Pest Control Association.

Small scale problems can be tackled by DIY treatments. Larger infestations may require professional assistance. If structural timbers are affected they may need to be checked by a structural engineer and possibly replaced.

The furniture beetle is an important and serious pest of structural and decorative timbers. 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. 'Woodworm' is the larval stage of the furniture beetle's life cycle. It is the larvae which causes damage tunnelling through timber, reducing its strength.

Appearance

First sign of woodworm is the appearance of neat round holes, 2mm across, in wooden surfaces, often accompanied by tiny piles of flour like wood dust beneath them. The holes, sometimes called 'flight holes' are made the adult beetles as they leave the timber.

Recent holes will appear light coloured. Older holes will be darker. Adults may emerge over a period of time and other immature grubs may still remain tunnelling away inside the wood.

The adult Furniture Beetle is a small brown insect 3mm to 6mm long which flies. It lays eggs on rough, unpolished wood and the grubs bore straight into the wood - leaving no trace until they emerge as beetles three years or so later, usually between May and September.

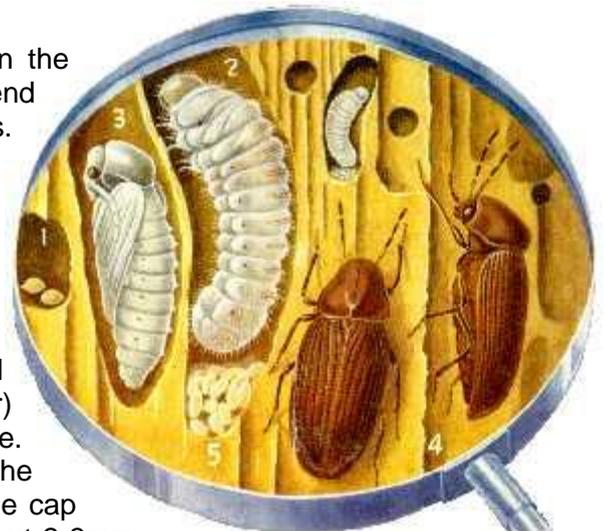
Because the adults can fly they may be found some distance from where they have emerged. They may be attracted towards the light so found in windowsills etc.

Woodworm is frequently introduced into the house in second-hand furniture, tea chests or wicker-work; but the beetles are quite capable of flying in through a window. They may then attack floorboards, joinery and, more seriously, structural timbers such as rafters and joists.

Biology

Adults lay about 30 or so eggs in cracks and crevices on the wood from which the female has emerged or onto the end grain of sawn timber. 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.



Treatment - furniture



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 pheromone traps, known as Anobid traps, may help to prove if the activity is current.

A range of DIY products is currently available for woodworm control. Sprays and coating are available. Some products can be injected into new flight holes so that they can penetrate deeper into the timber. Other products, such as special insecticidal polishes are available to prevent woodworm.

DIY treatments may not fully penetrate timbers and application may need to be repeated several times.

Structural Timbers

A range of products are available from DIY stores and builder's merchants to treat structural timbers such as floorboards and roof trusses. All timbers must be cleaned down first and any roof insulation material will have to be removed temporarily so that you can get at the joists to work on them. Also this avoids the fire-risk of insulation becoming impregnated with the fluid or small polystyrene granules dissolving together.

Cover electric cables and the cold water storage tank. Floorboards must be lifted to get at the undersides and the joists. Follow label recommendations carefully

Whilst chemical treatments may kill the 'worm' and prevent further damage, the strength of the timber may have been compromised. If possible a sample of timber should be removed and cut through to see how extensively it has been damaged. If damage is significant it is recommended that affected timbers are replaced with new timber which has been chemically protected from attack.

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.

A 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**. Details of their members can be found at: <http://www.property-care.org/PCSearch.asp> by emailing pca@property-care.org or by calling: 0844 375 4301

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August 2014