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POWDER POST BEETLES



Adult powder post beetle



Powder post beetle larvae



Powder post beetle damage to wood

There are number of insect species belonging to three separate families which all share the common name "powder post beetles." Adults of these families lay eggs in or on seasoned wood, including untreated wood surfaces in the home (furniture, wood floors and structural timbers), firewood and lumber stock piles. The larvae tunnel through and feed on the wood, converting it to a fine powder. When mature, the adults emerge to mate, leaving the wood surface perforated with small, round "shotholes." Powder post beetles may degrade the quality of lumber, destroy furniture and wooden tools and, in rare cases, they may completely destroy the structural integrity of buildings.

Lyctus beetle adults are 3-5 mm (1/8-1/5 inch) long, reddish-brown to black, and somewhat flattened, with the head distinctly visible from above.

Anobiid beetle (furniture beetle and death-watch beetle) adults are 2-5 mm (1/10-1/5 inch) long, reddish-brown to dark brown and covered with fine yellow hairs. Anobiids are cylindrically-shaped--the head is hidden by the thorax when viewed from above.

Bostrichid beetle adults are 3-6 mm (1/8-1/4 inch) long, dark brown to black, cylindrical in shape, and have an enlarged thorax which gives the beetle a humpbacked appearance.

The larvae of these beetles are seldom seen because they live entirely inside wood. Mature larvae are 5 mm (3/16 inch) long and are white with brownish heads and dark mandibles when mature.

Lyctus beetles commonly produce one generation per year. Females lay their eggs in the natural pores of timber, infesting only the sapwood of seasoned hardwoods. Eggs hatch in several days and the larvae tunnel into the wood. After pupation, the adults emerge (usually in June), leaving round shotholes on the wood surface. After mating, females will often reinfest the same timber.

Anobiid females lay their eggs on the surface cracks and crevices of wood or in the mouth of old exit holes. Anobiids usually attack the sapwood of seasoned softwoods. Eggs hatch in about a week and the larvae tunnel into the wood. Larvae may live for one to four years. After pupation, the adults emerge, mate and usually reinfest the same timber.

Bostrichid females bore tunnels into the wood to lay their eggs. Eggs hatch in approximately 21 days and the larvae mine the wood for nine months. In another 30 days the mature beetles emerge, mate and usually reinfest the same wood. Bostrichids prefer the sapwood of seasoned hardwoods, though they do attack softwoods.

Powder post beetle infestations are most often initiated by introducing infested material into the home. Avoid storing firewood in the home for more than two to three days prior to its use.

Any building materials introduced into the home should be checked for signs of beetles, damage or larvae.

Insecticides may be necessary for all but very light infestations in structural timbers. Insecticide solutions are generally painted on the wood surfaces. Professional extermination is often necessary.