

MEDIA RELEASE

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Search for new timber pest

A house to house survey of 300 properties is being undertaken in the Perth hills in a bid to flush out a serious quarantine pest that infests dried pine timber.

A second property in the hills was found to have pine timber infested with European House Borer following a warning last month to be on the lookout for the pest.

Until now, European House Borer was not known to occur in Western Australia and previous infestations in the Eastern States were eradicated more than a decade ago.

In a coordinated action, the Department of Agriculture and Forest Products Commission are undertaking surveillance at timber yards and pine plantations within close proximity to the metropolitan area.

Department entomologist Mike Grimm urged the public to inspect dried untreated pine timber and report if they noticed external oval shaped holes or tunnels or galleries when cutting or planing the timber.

"This is a particularly serious pest in Europe and we want to locate and eradicate all infestations before it becomes established and does major damage, which potentially will not only affect individuals but the softwood timber industry," Mr Grimm said.

"This pest only attacks seasoned untreated pine timber, not hardwoods or other types of timber. Based on the South African experience it can also be found in dead branches of standing pine trees.

"Early detection is difficult as the larvae tunnel through the wood for several years weakening the timber before emerging in the warmer months as a beetle, leaving characteristic oval shaped holes measuring about 5mm to 10 mm.

"Other possible evidence is a powdery substance called frass on the floor below the holes or seeing larvae or larvae tunnels when cutting dried pine timbers," he said.

The beetle is 18-25 mm in length, has a dark brown to black body and a slightly flattened appearance. The surface of the first body segment behind the head has two raised black, shiny knobs, which look like eyes. Its wings are usually all black and may have distinctive white patches.

Anyone who suspects they have detected evidence of European House Borer, should contact the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on free call 1800 084 881 during office hours.

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