

MEDIA RELEASE

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Government Officers to undertake second state wide search for EHB

Department of Agriculture, Forest Products Commission and CALM staff will be dusting off their binoculars and covering vast sections of WA over the next few months looking for signs of the European House Borer (EHB), an exotic pest of untreated pine that has been found in a number of Perth suburbs.

When EHB was identified in Parkerville in January 2004, the State Government established an EHB Program team, managed by the Forest Products Commission and the Department of Agriculture, to investigate the extent of EHB in Western Australia.

EHB Program Director, Lisa Christy said "The initial state wide assessment of pine trees, conducted in mid 2004 and covering over 1000 sites and more than 70,000 hectares of plantations, resulted in no positive finds in regional areas. It revealed that EHB was limited to 27 sites in metropolitan Perth.

"The assessment involved inspecting mainly dead pine trees, dead branches on living pine trees and untreated pine timber for signs of EHB emergence holes and taking samples of any suspect materials."

Since the initial search, the EHB Program Team has been conducting buffer surveys in a 2km radius of each of the affected sites to identify any further infested untreated pine. So far 25,000 homes have been door knocked and 13,000 surveys have been completed. With the help of the public, a further 14 affected sites have been detected. The sites identified are restricted to two main "clusters" in the Hills and Gnangara/Ellenbrook area, plus four isolated or outlier sites.

Ms Christy said "Follow up surveillance is necessary as the borer can tunnel through untreated seasoned pine from 2-12 years and infestation may only become evident when the adult beetle emerges leaving its characteristic 5mm -10mm oval shaped hole that runs with the grain of the timber.

"It is important for us to see if any EHB beetles have emerged during the summer months so we can manage the removal and destruction of any infested materials to stop any further spread of this unwanted pest.

"We believe we are in the fortunate position that with the help of the public, we may be able to eradicate EHB before it becomes established in WA.

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"We are urging all people to visit our website, www.ehb.wa.gov.au, then check any dead or unhealthy pine trees, pine logs and untreated pine timber and report any signs of EHB via the Freecall Hotline on 1800 084 881."

Teams of officers will be inspecting pine trees and timber from Esperance to Geraldton and throughout the Great Southern region. The officers will be asking property owners if they have seen any evidence of the borer and educating people on ways to reduce the spread of EHB, through not collecting or storing untreated pine.

More information about the European House Borer is available online at www.ehb.wa.gov.au or by calling the Freecall Hotline on 1800 084 881.

Photo Caption: Staff will investigate all pine trees for signs of new EHB emergence holes. Please email to djohnson@agric.wa.gov.au for pic.

ENDS

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