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INSECT NOTES

WOOD-INFESTING INSECTS

Homeowners can encounter a variety of wood-infesting insects in new and older houses. These insects include termites, carpenter bees, carpenter ants, old house borer, and Crematogaster ants. Some of these insect pests are more likely to occur in certain areas of the house than in others. The figure on the next page shows some of the likely locations of wood-infesting insects in houses.

Carpenter Bees. These insects build their nests in wood siding, the ends of logs used in modern log houses, or other areas where bare or painted wood is exposed. The males and females cut a 1/2 inch circular hole into the wood, then create a tunnel parallel to the surface of the wood. Within the tunnel the female stores food and lays eggs. The developing carpenter bee larvae are in individual cells in the tunnel. There is usually only one generation per year. Carpenter bees are large bees, resembling bumble bees.

Control of these insects can be achieved by spraying the entrance hole with an aerosol insecticide. Existing holes can be plugged with a moth ball to prevent adults from returning or the second generation adults from emerging.

Termites. Termite damage is usually first seen at or near the ground. However, damage can occur far above ground if the infestation has remained undetected for a long period. Termite-damaged wood has no sawdust associated with it, but the wood does contain mud tubes, and the galleries are lined with soil. Termite damage is sometimes located in wood adjacent to heaters or fireplaces. Perhaps the soil in these areas remains at higher temperatures during the winter, or the drainage around fireplaces is poor and the soil remains moist for long periods. Termites actually eat wood, and can cause physical damage.

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Control of subterranean termites is best left in the hands of a professional pest control operator. The application of termiticides in and around the home--around pipes, and wells, and heating ducts--requires experience and the proper tools. Chlordane is available for homeowner use for the control of subterranean termites. Follow the instructions on the label for proper use--remember that this chemical is intended for below ground application.

Carpenter Ants. These ants nest in moisture-damaged wood. Their nests are frequently encountered in wood in areas of the house that are exposed to water, including posts that rest on concrete slabs, or wood that is adjacent to a slab. Carpenter ants are active indoors during many months of the year, usually during the spring and summer. When ants are active in the house during late winter/early spring (February/March), the infestation (nest) is probably within the household. When carpenter ants are first seen in the spring and summer (May/June), then the nest is likely outdoors and the ants are simply coming in for food.

Control of carpenter ants nesting indoors is difficult, because the nest is not easily located. Carpenter are not trail-making ants, and it is difficult to impossible to follow one or more ants around the house in hopes of locating the nest. The best procedure is to inspect all possible locations--and to select these locations on the basis of potential water exposure. Once the nest is located, control can be achieved by the use of an aerosol insecticide.

Crematogaster Ants. These ants are very small, and reddish brown. They infest moisture damaged wood by building nests, and tunneling out small to large areas in the wood. They can be found in areas adjacent to downspouts, or in roofs that have small leaks. They are usually associated with houses on wooded lots. The amount of damage caused by these ants minimal--they are small and seem to restrict their nest building and tunneling to the moisture-damaged wood. However, they can produce a quantity of fine sawdust or frass, and that can cause some concern to homeowners.

Control of these small ants is best achieved by removing the damaged wood. The very presence of these ants indicates that the wood is damaged by moisture, and that there is a structural faults somewhere. Replacement of the wood would control the ants and correct the structural problem.

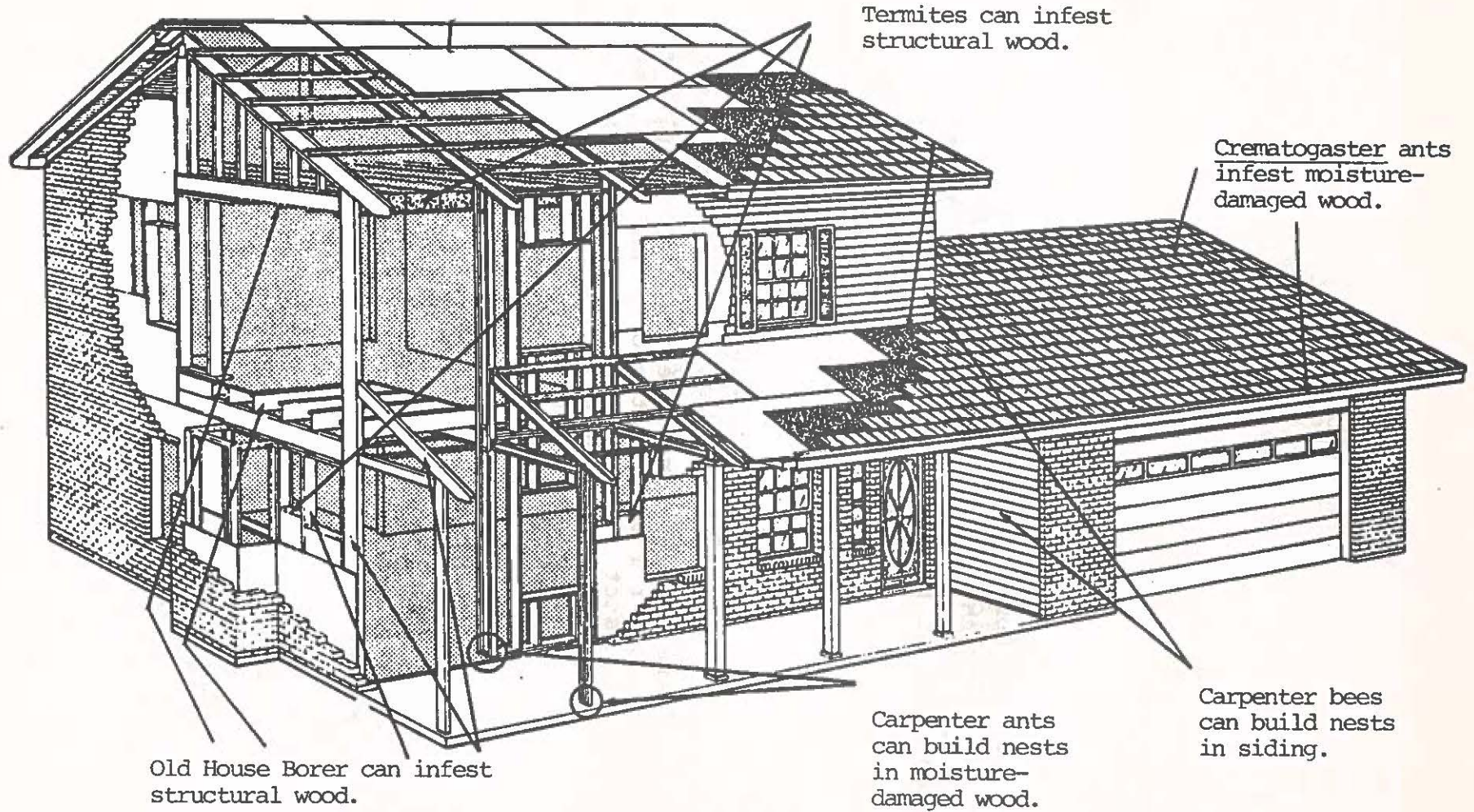
Old House Borer. The chewing sounds produced by the feeding of old house borer larvae can be heard in wood during the spring and summer months. The larvae feed little during the

winter months of December through February. The larvae can live in seasoned softwood for several years. When the adults are full grown, which usually takes about 5 years, they emerge through oval holes in the surface of the wood. Emergence occurs during June and July. During the first few years of feeding the larvae can not be heard, but when they are about 4 years old the chewing sounds are audible. The actual structural damage caused by these beetles depends on the number of larvae feeding and the extent of the infestation--how many years, and whether there has been a reinfestation.

Control of old house borers involves the use of insecticides applied to the surface of wood, or the use of an insecticidal gas--fumigation. When there is an extensive and active infestation of this insect, fumigation may be the best control method. However, limited infestations can be controlled by applying insecticides to the surface of the wood to prevent reinfestation, and perhaps kill larvae that may feed close to the surface and contact the chemical just below the surface.

SELECTING A PROFESSIONAL PEST CONTROL OPERATOR

- Small local companies can be just as reliable and capable as large, regional or national companies.
- There are no secret chemicals or formulas for the control of termites or other wood-infesting insects. There are a few chemicals available to all the professionals. The careful application of those chemicals is the most important aspect of insect control.
- Membership in the state or national association demonstrates some degree of professionalism and probably participation in regular training sessions.
- Ask that the company representative explain all the procedures to be used. Ask about odor or potential problems with wells located close to the house, or heating ducts buried in the slab or in walls.
- Consider getting the opinion of two or three professionals before making the final decision on treatment.



Termites can infest structural wood.

Crematogaster ants infest moisture-damaged wood.

Old House Borer can infest structural wood.

Carpenter ants can build nests in moisture-damaged wood.

Carpenter bees can build nests in siding.