

Wood boring insect

Anobium Punctatum



Floorboard showing the effects of woodworm

Anobium Punctatum, is known generally as the common furniture beetle or 'woodworm'. It is considered to be the main cause of damage to timber in the UK over the last 100 years. In the last 50 years, insecticidal treatments have been widely used to 'treat and preserve' timbers in buildings thought to be at risk. In the UK, buildings which are more than 50 years old have generally been treated. Most mortgage lenders now require a guarantee before issuing mortgages that the building has had no activity or that satisfactory treatment has been carried out.

Identification and life cycle

Anobium punctatum is part of a large number of beetles that attack timber in temperate climates. In its natural environment it has colonised woodlands of northern Europe and may have colonised other similar temperate environments. The adults are small oval brown beetles approximately 4-6mm long.

Adult beetles emerge from infected timber in the spring, between May and August. They form a small round hole of approximately 1-2mm in diameter on the surface of the wood (exit hole). The adult beetles mate soon after emergence, the female lays small pearl-like eggs in clusters of up to 50, these may be seen with the naked eye on timber. The adult beetles then die without causing further damage to timber.

The eggs generally hatch within six to ten days under suitable environmental conditions.

Like many other insects, the majority of the lifecycle of *Anobium punctatum* is spent as larvae. It is greyish white in colour with a narrow dark band over the mouth parts and grow to about 6mm long. The front part of the body appears relatively thick or hunched and has three pairs of visible legs. The rear section of the body is thinner, with a rounded tail-end. It is in the larval stage that *Anobium punctatum* causes most of the damage to timber.



The conditions required within buildings for *Anobium punctatum*

Conditions within an occupied building are generally unsuitable for *Anobium punctatum* to lay eggs, consume timber and complete its lifecycle. This is due to the insect needing the relative humidity to be above 60 per cent for the eggs to hatch or for pupation to its adult form to occur. Due to fluctuating and relatively low moisture contents of timber and the intermittent high temperatures that occur in many structures also prevent or restrict the growth and development of *Anobium punctatum*. For this reason, the insect generally requires at least three years to complete its lifecycle, not one.

It is expected that at least 50 per cent of buildings in the UK have had some prior infection and decay by *Anobium punctatum*.

There are typical causes that can lead to an infestation:

Poorly ventilated basement and sub-floor structures, particularly the cupboards and voids beneath staircases.
Condensation and/or high relative humidity.





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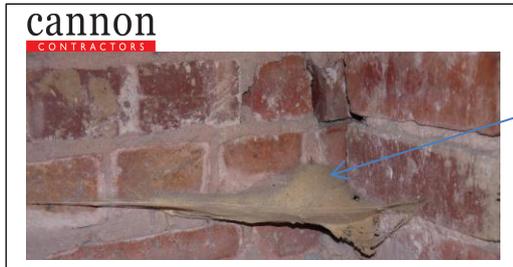
Poorly ventilated roof voids.
Timbers that become damp and could have fungal problems.
Bathroom and kitchen timber work.

In the north and west of the UK roof voids is a more common area of attack due to the relatively high moisture levels and reduced summer temperatures in roof structures.

How to identify activity

The difficulty in most cases of activity is due to the location of the timber being attack. The timbers usually being attack are in locations that are not within everyday areas (lofts and cellars), so infestations can be left undiscovered for a long period of time.

Whilst the exit holes on the timber are a clear indication of an attack, generally it's the byproduct of an attack that is an easier visual indicator that an attack is occurring. This substance is called *frass* and is like sawdust and in cellars is often falls and deposits in spiders webs



The web catching the *frass*, and not a fly!



Here you can clearly see the *frass* deposited on the carpet that has formed small piles as the adult has left the skirting board.

Another sign is finding dead beetles on surfaces such as window cills usually after mating.

Treatment

The first thing is to determine that you have an active infestation. Just because you may have found holes and *frass* this may be historic. The holes have always been there and the *frass* has fallen out of the exit holes due to recent building work or disturbance of the timber.

More recent emergence holes can be distinguished by the sharpness of the edges of the holes and the differential colour between the interiors and exteriors of holes, as these may soon become contaminated by dust or the surface application of paints and other materials.

Long term observation could be taken by painting or applying special paper strips may be applied over suspected areas that will allow identifying new emergence holes as these appear.



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Once activity has been established then treatment should be approached by establishing the extent of the attack and its structural significance. Should the attack be well established the damage to the timber may require completely replacing as it is now weakened.

Should the structural issues not be a major concern the chemical treatments then can be applied to the timbers, however there are limitations in chemical treatments. Chemical sprays do not kill any larvae immediately, this is only done when the now adult intends to emerge and therefore starts to eat through the treated timbers. Therefore it may take a year or two for an area of active infection to finally die out and for pupation and emergence of adults to stop.

Should you suspect that you may have an infestation or simply feel that you need a survey you can call on us to carry out a survey.

A detailed report will be issued presenting our findings and our recommendations. If required a quotation will be issued with the reports to provide the costs of any remedial work required.

Some of our surveys are FREE and will be presented with a detailed report. Other surveys will incur a charge, should you require any further information about our surveys and associated costs then please get in touch.



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