



European House Borer



What is it?

European House Borer (EHB) *Hylotrupes bajulus* (Linnaeus) is a destructive insect pest of untreated seasoned (dry) coniferous wood including Pine, Fir and Spruce. Larch, Hoop and Bunya pine are also believed to be susceptible to damage by EHB.

EHB, also known as old house borer, is found in Europe, Middle East, South and North Africa, South and North America, China and Asia Minor. The pest probably came into Western Australia in imported pine timber as larvae.

In WA EHB has been found in living trees with dead wood incursions, dead trees, logs and firewood. EHB also infests susceptible roof timbers, door and wall frames, flooring, architraves and pine articles such as furniture, pallets, crates, boxes and dunnage.

Long term EHB infestation has the potential to cause significant structural damage to homes built with untreated pinewood.

What to look for?

The spread of EHB is slow. Larvae can remain in host timber for 2-12 years (2-5 years in dead pine trees in WA but may be longer in seasoned timber) before emerging as adult beetles. Adult beetles are brownish-black to black and slightly flattened appearance. Wings are usually black and may have distinctive white patches. The top surface of the body behind the head has two raised black shiny knobs. Adults are 8-25mm in length with antennae about half as long as the body.

Female beetles prefer to lay eggs in wood they emerged from. They can fly up to 800 metres to find new timber if the old timber is exhausted. The most visible evidence to indicate infestation is:

- characteristic oval-shaped exit holes, 5-10mm in length and running in line with the grain of the timber, where the adult beetle has emerged at the end of its larvae phase
- frass, a mixture of powdery wood dust and pellets of excrement, can sometimes be found below the exit hole in the infested timber
- long blister-like swellings under the thin layer of uneaten wood can sometimes be seen, caused by tightly packed frass
- dead adult beetles.

Other less obvious evidence to indicate EHB timber infestation includes:

- EHB larvae within timber. Larvae are elongated and cylindrical with an enlarged and flattened head. The length varies up to 40mm
- tunnels (galleries) within the timber are formed by the boring larvae and are often tightly packed with frass. Galleries rarely break through the timber surface and are seldom detected
- a soft scraping sound by the larvae as they feed. This can often be best heard at night
- batches of up to 120 eggs which are laid in crevices or cracks in timber.



EHB exit hole.
Picture not to
scale.



EHB larvae can be up to
40mm in length.

Is my suburb affected?

Restricted Movement Zones (RMZs) with imposed control measures to regulate the storage, treatment, movement and disposal of carrier pinewood have been created as buffer zones around infestations. To view current RMZs maps visit EHB website at ehb.wa.gov.au.

Property owners, occupiers and businesses within RMZs are required to follow control measures to prevent EHB infestation of untreated pinewood and minimise spread through pinewood movement.

The Building Commission of WA provides advisory notes for construction outlining building requirements within RMZs for durability against insect attack.

How to minimise spread and infestation

If you:

- have established homes built of untreated pine periodically inspected for EHB as part of your pest control contract
- protect untreated pinewood by storage in a suitable building, enclosure or keep fully enclosed in plastic wrapping material
- do not collect or remove pine placed on verges for local government collection
- dispose of unwanted pine timber (including tree waste, off-cuts, articles and furniture) through green council bin, council verge collection or direct deposit to local council refuse facility
- burn felled pine trees, parts of pine trees and waste timber articles under local government burn permit
- report suspected signs of EHB activity (including exit holes in timber) to EHB Hotline 1800 084 881. Sample insects should be placed in a glass/plastic sealed container and timber articles fully enclosed in plastic wrapping for inspection by a pest controller or department officer.

Regulation

- do not remove seasoned pinewood from a RMZ without approved treatment if pine is exposed for 72 hours or more
- contact the department to request inspection and written permit to remove untreated pine from a RMZ (conditions may apply)
- contact the department to determine approved timber treatments



Structural pine broken away to expose EHB infestation.

- pine furniture kept indoors may be removed from the RMZ, where no signs of EHB are evident
- phone Quarantine WA on +61 (0)8 9344 1800 for interstate timber export compliance enquiries.

Management

Quarantine control measures introduced in 2006 by the Department of Agriculture and Food has played a large role in reducing EHB populations within infested areas. Research into the EHB life cycle and behaviour has created a wealth of information and control and containment strategies have been developed.

Self-management by stakeholders is vital to prevent infestation and minimise EHB spread. Individuals, business and government are urged to familiarise themselves with the options available. Visit ehb.wa.gov.au for further information including extensive information on EHB descriptions, signs of EHB activity and suitable control measures.

To maximise the chances of future detections the department has assisted Challenger Institute of Technology and developed an online EHB training course. Visit the EHB website for further information.

To prevent the spread of EHB to other Australian states/territories, their quarantine services have imposed restrictions on pine exports from WA. Contact Quarantine WA on +61 (0)8 9334 1800 for enquiries regarding entry conditions and certificate arrangements.

Contacts

- call Quarantine WA on +61 (0)8 9334 1800 for interstate timber export enquiries
- visit ehb.wa.gov.au for more information
- freecall EHB Hotline 1800 084 881 should you wish to discuss your particular circumstances with a department officer.

