



Wharf Borer (*nacerdes melanura*)

Wharf borers are found throughout much of the continental United States and Canada, having been introduced from Europe presumably through commerce. Because Wharf Borers are found in very moist wood, they are particularly associated with coastal areas, lakeshores, rivers, estuaries and waterways. Wharf Borers have been found in such diverse places as wharf timbers, damp crawlspaces, partially buried wood greenhouse benches or in any wood that has a very high moisture content and is subject to decay.

The life cycle of the wharf borer from egg to adult usually takes about one year, although in cooler locales the life cycle may take several more years. Adults are usually noticed as they emerge from wood. Emergence can take place at any time, but it is most common in spring and summer. The female deposits eggs on an appropriate piece of wood and the larvae tunnel into wood, growing and producing long, elaborate tunnels.

Identification

The adult wharf borers are narrow, flattened insects approximately 1cm. long. When viewed from above, the main body varies from brown to a rusty reddish yellow. The tips of the wings are generally black, along with the eyes, legs and underside of the insect. The body of the insect is covered with very fine yellow hairs. The antennae of the adult are about half as long as the length of the body.

Mature larvae are about two to three times longer than the adults and are a light brown to cream colour. The mandibles of the larvae are dark brown, darkening to black at the tips. The larvae have three sets of relatively long legs located on the thorax and also have two sets of leg-like appendages on the third and fourth abdominal segment. The larvae are sparsely covered with very fine brown hairs, and have a button-like swelling on the upper side between the thoracic and abdominal segments.

Treatment methods

Generally, the wharf borer is primarily a nuisance pest, in that any wood suitable for completing its life cycle is generally structurally unsound anyway. In situations where the adult population is large enough to pose a problem the best control strategy would be to correct any wood moisture problems that might exist, and remove any structurally unsound wood or wood that has been infested with the larvae. If necessary the wood should be replaced with wood treated with an appropriate preservative or a material not susceptible to insect attack. They are harmless to man, do not bite and treatment is rarely necessary. If treatment is required then the application of a suitable insect spray or powder should prove effective. These treatments are available at most garden centres and DIY stores.

ALWAYS READ THE LABEL BEFORE USING ANY INSECTICIDES.