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WOOD DESTROYING INSECT INFESTATION INSPECTION

Ninety-five percent of the time your mortgage lender will require that a wood destroying insect infestation inspection be completed on the property you wish to purchase prior to settlement. This will insure that it does not have an active infestation or major structural damage from wood destroying insects. The following insects are classified as wood destroying insects: Termites, Wood Boring Beetles, Wood Attacking Ants, Carpenter Bees, and Fungus.

Homebuyers generally overreact after discovering any of the wood destroying insect's presence and on occasion lose interest in the house. Actually, the discovery of an infestation should not be cause for alarm. Concern maybe, but alarm absolutely not. 85% of infestations are either inactive or have already been treated in the past to rectify the problem. There have been many half-truths spread throughout our community about the destructibility of wood destroying insects. Most of these half-truths have been brought about by the very same industry that treats them. Between the pest control business and the chemical industry well over 3 billion dollars a year is spent by consumers. Homechek is not implying that chemical treatment is not necessary; however, we are saying that if more consumers were educated about wood destroying insects that 40% of the homes would not need to be chemically treated. That is why it's important to have a wood destroying insect infestation inspection done by an impartial inspection company that does not perform insect treatments to earn their money. Also check to see if the Inspection Company offers any kind of guarantees. Typical costs for a wood destroying insect infestation inspection range from \$55-\$95.

Termites

Termites have been around for several hundred million years. They live in colonies anywhere from two to fifteen feet below the ground. Termites play an important role in the natural ecological cycle. They feed on cellulose, the principle ingredient of wood, and help to break down dead trees in forests and other wooded areas, thus enriching the soil. Termites began attacking houses when the wooded areas were cleared for building construction and there was no other available source of food near their colony. Termites work very slowly. It takes many years for termites to do serious structural damage to a house.

The good news is that there are more homes without termites than those with them. Good home construction plays a large part in whether or not termites can enter them. Moisture control in and around the house plays another important role in a termite colonies' survival, There are very few houses on record that have been damaged by termites to a point where they are considered unsafe. Quite often the damage caused by termites (by the time termite activity is discovered) is minor, and repair or replacement of the infested wood members is not necessary. Even with a heavy infestation, usually only a portion of the house is affected. And even then, only a portion of the wood framing might be damaged to a point where it has lost its structural value. In this case, only the affected members require repair or replacement. It is important to note that a termite condition can be completely controlled through the application of chemical insecticides and any major damage can be repaired.

A complete termite inspection consists of an interior and exterior check of that portion of the house that is close to, or in contact with, the ground. The exterior inspection consists of the inspector probing the attached wood trim, posts, and framing members that are on or close to the ground. The interior inspection consists of probing garage doorframes, basement or lower-level window frames, step stringers, deck posts, and the entry-door riser. Termite activity is of concern only when it is found in the house or in an attached structure such as a garage or deck. If you find termite damage or shelter tubes on wood debris on a fence post in the yard or in a piece of wood debris on the ground in the yard, all that means is that those pieces of wood have had termite infestation. It does not mean that the house is infested with termites and should be treated. The interior inspection for termites is generally conducted in the basement and crawl space. The inspector should be looking for termite shelter tubes and/or damage to sill plates, headers, and joists below grade or adjacent to a dirt-filled, cement covered patio.

If an active termite infestation is found, chemical treatment by a professional is necessary. Typical costs for termite treatment can range from \$800-\$2000.

Carpenter Ants(wood attacking ants)

Carpenter ants are easy to recognize. They are among the largest ants in the United States, worker ants varying in size between ¼” and ½” long. They are black or black with a reddish brown midsection. A carpenter ant colony can be located on the ground in a decaying log or tree trunk or in the roof framing of a house. The ants also nest high in trees and can fly from there to set up new colonies in a house. They build their nests in a variety of locations, preferring wood that is moist or softened by decay. Carpenter ants differ from termites in that they do not eat wood. They merely excavate it to build a nest. Damage from carpenter ants is generally minimal and does not require repairs.

Inspecting a house for carpenter ants, the inspector should look specifically at sections of wood that have begun to decay as result of a past or current moisture condition. Typical locations to inspect are portions of the wood framing, siding, or trim that are in contact with the ground; wood that has been dampened by the overflow from defective roof gutters; the area around a damaged section of siding or flashing; the base of hollow porch posts and column, and areas with large open joints as might occasionally be found around exterior windows and doors. These areas should be probed with a screwdriver or an ice pick. If the wood yields, breaks, or cracks and ants come crawling out, there is a good chance that the nest has been located. If the nest is found, it can be treated directly with insecticide. If not, dusts or sprays can be used where the ants are commonly seen. The latter might not eliminate the infestation, but it should reduce it. Typical costs for carpenter ant treatment can range from \$80-\$550.

Wood Boring Beetles

There are over ten different classes of wood boring beetles. We will only discuss the two most common types of beetles in our area. These two beetles are the powder post beetle and the old house borer. For the most part these two beetles are usually brought into the house via the wood that had been used in its construction. Building materials might become infested while being stockpiled in the lumberyard. The beetles lay eggs in the open pores, cracks, and crevices in the surface of unfinished wood. After the eggs hatch, the larvae feed and tunnel they're way through the wood, reducing it to a powder. Depending on the temperature and moisture content of the wood, the larval stage can be as short as a few months or as long as a few years.

Inspection for powder post beetles and the old house borer should be performed along with the inspection for termites. When probing the exposed wood-framing members, look for the small round and oval emergence holes of the beetles. Since the beetles must emerge from these holes, the fact that there are emergence holes does not mean that the wood member is currently infested. Newly formed flight holes are light and

clean in appearance, as a fresh saw cut; older holes are darker in color. Statistically speaking, Homechek has found that of all the homes it has inspected and found beetle evidence in the wood members that only 10% of them were active. In fact, the wood members that are no longer beetle infested will still have small amounts of larvae's frass continue to sift through the holes for many years as result of normal vibrations of the wood. The structural damage caused by these two beetles is generally cosmetic in nature and does not affect the structural integrity of the home. It takes an extremely large infestation and years of existence for major structural damage to occur in the home.

Replacing that piece of wood or coating it with an appropriate insecticide can often control an active infestation in a single wood framing member. However, if an active infestation is widespread, chemical treatment by a professional is necessary. Typical costs for wood boring beetle treatment can range from \$400-\$1500