



Borers are back!

February 2017

With the onset of hotter weather, adult borers are coming out of the woodwork. The larvae, having munched their way through wood for months, even years, have pupated in their wooden nurseries and, as adults, are emerging to enter the mating stage of their lifecycle.

Most borers are the larvae (immature stages) of certain moths and beetles, and in Western Australia (WA) we have a mixture of native and non-native species.

While the emphasis is often on European house borer (EHB), you are more likely to see native longicorn beetles, auger beetles and weevils in your garden or trees. These are the most commonly reported borers to our Pest and Disease Information Service (PaDIS) at present.

EHB is a destructive pest that can cause major structural damage to homes built with untreated pinewood. Damage is caused by the larvae making tunnels through pinewood, weakening its structural integrity. In WA, EHB can live undetected as larvae for 2 to 5 years before emerging from the timber as an adult beetle. These beetles then lay eggs in the same piece of timber from which they have emerged to begin the life cycle again.

EHB is only found in dry pinewood such as dead branches on living pine trees, furniture, structural and non-structural timber, crates and pallets. EHB does not damage living (green) timber. If the tree is not pine, it is not EHB. For more information visit agric.wa.gov.au and search 'EHB'.

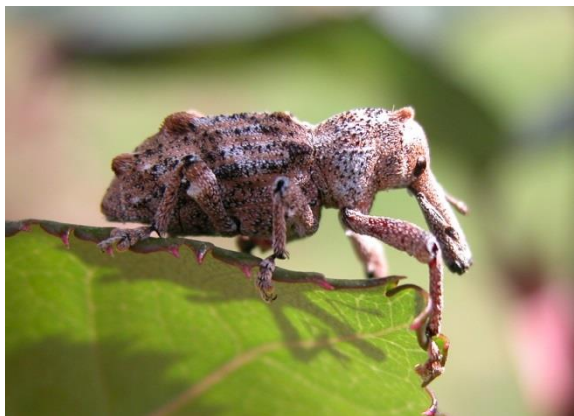
The native eucalyptus longicorn beetle, *Phoracantha semipunctata*, lays eggs under bark or in cracks of the host tree. They target native trees such as *Eucalyptus* species. Eggs are laid singly or in small batches by the adult beetles, and the larvae hatch and bore into the tree. The life cycle from egg to adult is approximately two to three years.



The common auger beetle, *Xylopsocus gibbicollis*, is a native borer that attacks mostly grapevines, while the native larger auger beetle, *Bostrychopsis jesuita* is often reported emerging from backyard fruit trees.



The elephant weevil, *Orthorhinus cylindrirostris*, is a brown grey weevil with a long slender snout and long forelegs. Adults and larvae feed on eucalypts and a variety of other native and ornamental plants. They are also a pest of cultivated vine crops.



Other insect borers include fig longicorn beetle, *Acalolepta vastator*, vine weevil, *Orthorhinus klugi*, fruit-tree borer moth, *Maroga melanostigma*, and vine borer moth, *Echiomima* species.

Borers rarely infest healthy plants growing in their preferred environments. However, when trees or shrubs are transplanted, or stressed from drought, soil compaction, sun scald, or injuries, this can weaken them and make them more susceptible to attack. For this reason borers are generally considered a secondary problem and effort should be made to keep the plant as healthy as possible so it can resist borer attack.

Early signs of borer infestation can include wilting terminal shoots and branch or crown dieback, while more obvious signs include exit holes with sawdust-like frass in the trunk or limb of the plant.

Treatment

Take the best care of the plant you can, as healthy plants can often withstand some borer attack. Correct identification of the type of borer will also help guide any treatment options.

Sadly, in most cases systemic insecticides, whether applied as injections or as soil treatments, will have little effect, and while pushing a piece of wire into borer exit holes may sometimes kill an adult beetle or larva intersecting that tunnel, it will not provide effective control. Look after your plants as best you can and report unfamiliar insects to help guide your treatment options.

Please report

To maintain surveillance for new and damaging borers to WA, please take photos of both the insect and any damage to the plant, and report via the options below:



Use our free **MyPestGuide™ Reporter app** or MyPestGuide **website**:
mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au

Email photos and location details to info@agric.wa.gov.au **or**

Call 1800 084 881.

Reporting unfamiliar pests

DAFWA's Pest and Disease Information Service (PaDIS) screens enquiries for new weeds, pests and plant diseases, which could negatively impact the success of WA's local horticulture and agricultural industries and the ability to grow home produce.

