

# Selling or Buying a House

When you purchase your dream coastal house, the last thing on your mind might be whether the house is structurally safe from woodborer beetles, fungi and subterranean termites.

Beetle inspections for the deed of sale are not uncommon in the coastal regions and arguably a necessity. Most banks enforce these beetle inspections for the home loan to be approved, after all it is their property until you have paid it off, and they want peace of mind that their investment is in a good condition and free from Wood Destroying Organisms.

Older clauses in some of the deed of sale documents only call for 'notifiable' beetles; (Two woodborer and one termite species); many years ago, it was required by a qualified beetle inspector to notify the Dept. of Agriculture, about certain beetle to determine the economic impact and also the location of these insects across the country, the relevance of the research then determined the risk and exposure (more so in some regions than in others), and the so called Beetle Clause was established albeit "de-facto". In the modern context, the responsibility falls to the realty industry to ensure compliance in the broader context and "Wood Destroying Organisms" of which Beetle is one, contributes to the meeting of such compliancy as called for by legislation and of course the financial institutions mortgaging the properties. It also falls to the estate agents and transferring attorneys to ensure the correct compliance processes and documentation is in place.

In 1978 SAPCA (South African Pest Control Association) undertook stewardship of Wood Destroying Organisms related to the Real Estate marketplace and within the parameters of Pest/Organism Management and related structural compliance.

SAPCA is also the ONLY association

authority that sets guidelines and standards and requires of inspectors to report as comprehensively as possible in order to enable both buyer and seller as much information as possible for the purposes of the relevant and applicable transactions. There is a working example (Public Domain) beetle clause on the SAPCA website that can be downloaded and inserted in the deed of sale; this covers all the relevant beetles, termites and fungi and protects both the seller and buyer.



**Johan Reynecke**

A full list of SAPCA Qualified woodborer inspectors is available on the website for reference. In 2013 SAPCA introduced the SAPCA Woodborer Certificate of Clearance. This certificate can only be issued by a SAPCA woodborer inspector. This certificate qualifies that the woodborer inspector follows a certain guideline during inspection and if remedial treatment is required, is a qualified Pest Control Operator with the correct registrations under Act 36 of 1947 of the Department of Agriculture.

SAPCA encourages buyers to make use of the association and its inspectorate to ensure compliancy

and information reporting. Properties and residences do not necessarily have to be old, albeit that older properties and building are generally more prone to established infestation and / or organism establishment or Fungal spore colonisation, much depends on the geographic location, the material used for construction, the weatherproofing, Sealing and a number of other physical factors that contribute to structural compromise or Organism support. The presence of damp or flaking/blistering paint may be an indication of retained moisture and fungal spore colonisation which could lead to Rot, regardless of the age of the house or property.

A qualified inspector will look for more than just woodborer beetles, this includes the type of building, the age of the building, how the property was maintained over the years etc, all for the express purpose of gathering relevant information about the property in order to afford an educated assessment and also to determine if a potential problem could exist.

Introducing wood destroying organisms into a residence is as easy as buying untreated furniture, artworks, etc and that cute hippopotamus, that you bought from the road-side stall on your last trip to our neighbouring states, may have some really tough beetle in the wood, just waiting for a softer piece of your favourite timber floor. Termites from other regions are often brought into the Western Cape when relocating families move from the Northern Provinces or indeed from KZN. Very often, the piece of timber that was used to secure a geyser or make a walkway in the ceiling, may contain latent infestation which under supportive conditions will emerge and of course propagate.

Using untreated timbers in any construction comes with its own risk. Subterranean termites also poses a threat to the structural integrity of a dwelling, a subterranean termite classifies as any termite emerging

from soil, including harvester termites. Some termites are wood destroying whilst others, like the harvester termites, destroys fabric and paper-like substances. They also excavate the soil underneath building foundations and can cause floors to collapse and wall and plaster to crack. Experience shows that In some cases they colonise the wall cavities and push huge amounts of soil into the attics until the ceiling collapse. Drywood termites are not part of the subterranean termite families and are predominant in the eastern coastal regions such as Natal and Eastern Cape. They travel in furniture and there have been incidents reported in the Western Cape. They destroy wood and examples include entire roof destruction and collapse. Wood rot is a fungus which colonises and compromises the cells of timber, and causes rapid and serious structural decay, particularly in damp conditions.

Wood Destroying Organism inspections rely on the inspectors' knowledge of organism and insect

biology, habitats, experience and physical signs such as water leaks, wood rot and damp to guide them during an inspection. Inaccessible area cannot be inspected and will be noted on the inspection report that must accompany the certificate of clearance. A qualified, experienced woodborer inspector will note on his inspection report any structural damage to wood which was not caused by insects or fungi or potential problems or compromise that does not fall under the certificate of clearance, and these include items such as loose balustrades or loose staircase steps.

Potential future wood damage should also be reported, and these influences include; drainage, damp, residual water, slope, etc. Only an experienced woodborer inspector will be able to detect and relay this information back to the seller and buyer. All buildings on the stand/erf would normally be inspected and form part of the certificate. Wendy houses would also be inspected if they are included in the deed of sale as part of the sale.

Exclusions are to be pertinently noted within the report documents. Treatment and remedy may be in the form of physical replacement or fumigation or remedial application or any combination of the aforementioned. This is dependent on the severity of the situation, and the required and desired outcome. Use a SAPCA inspector for peace-of-mind and always confirm the inspectors' credentials beforehand. Anything related to chemical treatment or fumigation must be carried out by a qualified and registered Pest Control Person, registered with the Dept. of Agriculture under Act 36 of 1947, and the Registration of the person carrying out the inspection or treatment; must be relevant to the discipline and qualification in the specific field of expertise.

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# All female cockroach found in Cape Town during woman's month.

**Ecofirst pest control operator – Eileen Slabber working with the cleaning lady and Professor Picker**

## Background

On 6 August 2014 I received a sample of two cockroaches that had been found at the Kenilworth Training room kitchen. On receipt, they were sealed in plastic and had begun to decompose.

## Results

The two cockroaches were identified as the Surinam cockroach (*Pycnoscelus surinamensis*). This is an invasive species that has not yet been recorded from South Africa.

It is a tropical species that originates from Asia and Indomalaysian region. From there it has spread to most tropical islands of the world, Australia, South America, Southern USA and in Africa to the Congo and coastal

Tanzania. It is thus of great interest to find this species now in South Africa. The cockroaches are slow-moving and generally burrow. They are parthenogenetic (no males) and their global spread is thought to be via transport of goods by humans.

Given their tropical origins, they may not establish in the colder parts of South Africa, although the subtropical climate in the eastern parts of the region would suit them.

It is essential that the building in which they were found be subject to thorough fumigation. It is likely that the original contamination occurred via a boxed food product. If possible the packaging of all products used in the kitchen and originating from Asia or Malaysia should be inspected. Fumigation should be repeated at

intervals to ensure that any remaining Surinam cockroaches are eliminated, to stop them establishing in South Africa.



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