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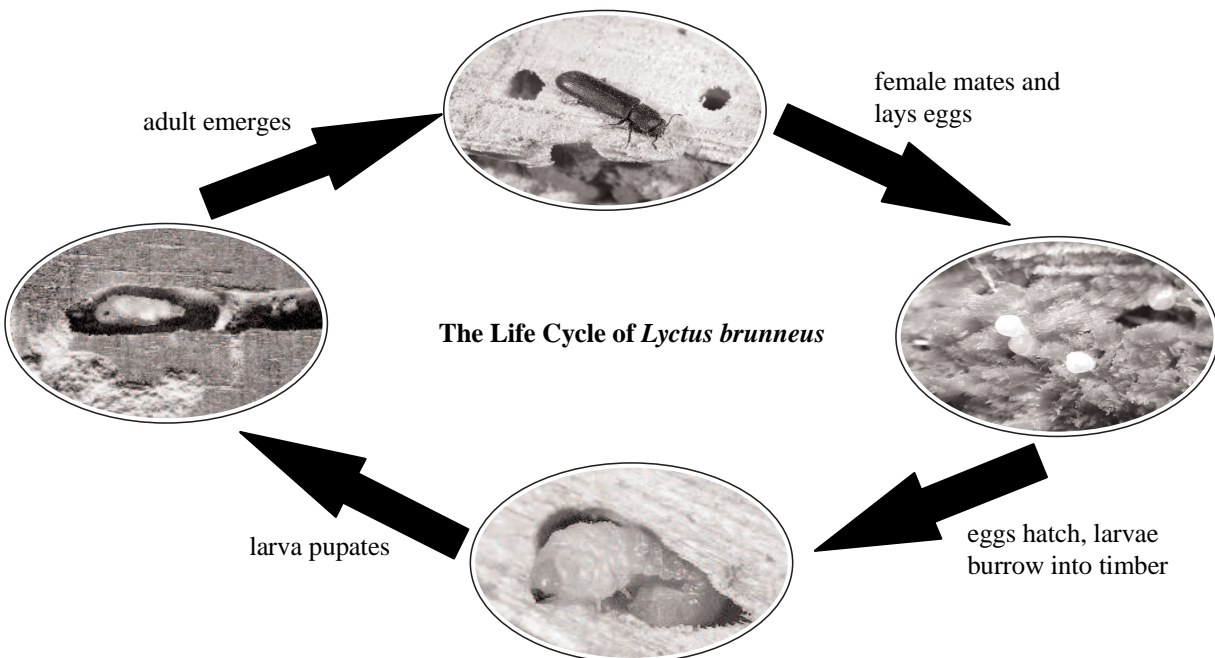
POWDER POST BEETLE

One species of **Powder Post Beetle**, *Lyctus brunneus*, is commonly found in Britain. This, and several rarer species, attack the sapwood of certain wide-pored hardwood timbers. These timbers are susceptible to attack when partly or recently seasoned. **Powder Post Beetles** are primarily pests of timber yards, but can cause considerable damage to furniture, sports equipment and other manufactured articles inside buildings. *Lyctus* also attacks wood block floors and joinery, both solid wood and plywood.

Oak is a timber commonly attacked, but other hardwoods such as African mahogany, ash, elm, hickory, obeche, ramin, sweet chestnut, sycamore and walnut may also be infested.

Life cycle

In common with all beetles, there are four distinct stages in the life cycle: egg, larva, pupa and adult. Of these, it is the **larval** stage which causes the damage within the wood.



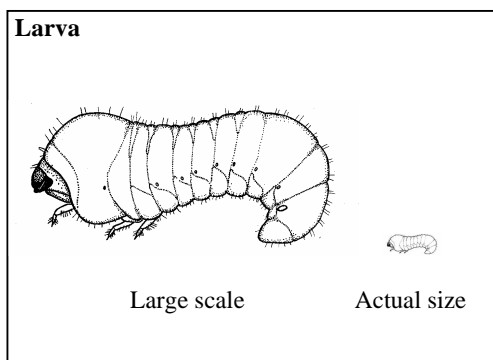
Egg

The female beetle lays eggs in wood using an egg-tube (ovipositor) which will only fit into pores of a sufficiently large size. Timbers such as beech, birch, boxwood and horse chestnut have pores which are too small and are therefore not attacked by powder post beetles. Softwood timbers and the heartwoods of all timbers are also immune to attack by these insects.

The female first checks that the timber has a high enough starch content for larval development. She then lays her eggs deep in the pores of the timber. The eggs are long, cylindrical and whitish, individually laid, and each female may produce between 30 and 50. After one or two weeks the egg hatches and the young larva eats a yolk-like substance inside its egg before boring into the wood.

Larva

The young larva tunnels extensively within the timber for one or two years, or for considerably less if the temperature is high. The larva gradually reduces infested timber to dust, leaving a thin veneer of sound wood on the outside. The infested article then crumbles at a touch, hence the name “powder post”. As it eats through the sapwood the creamy-white larva grows in size to a maximum of 6mm in length and leaves a fine, flour-like bore-dust, without faecal pellets, in the tunnel. This dust may spill out from old exit holes or through cracks in the surface veneer.



Pupa

When fully grown, the larva burrows towards the surface of the timber where it constructs a special pupal chamber in which it changes into a pupa. The pupa is white, approximately 4mm long and takes two to four weeks to develop into an adult.

Adult

The adult beetle emerges from the wood by biting a circular “flight” or “exit” hole 1 to 2mm in diameter. The adults usually emerge between June and August, although in centrally-heated premises they can be found throughout the year.

The adult powder post beetles are 5mm long, red-brown, narrow and somewhat flattened. They fly actively, particularly in warm weather. After mating the female seeks suitable egg-laying sites, lays her eggs and the life cycle begins again. Dry, seasoned timber indoors generally has too low a starch content for re-infestation to occur.

