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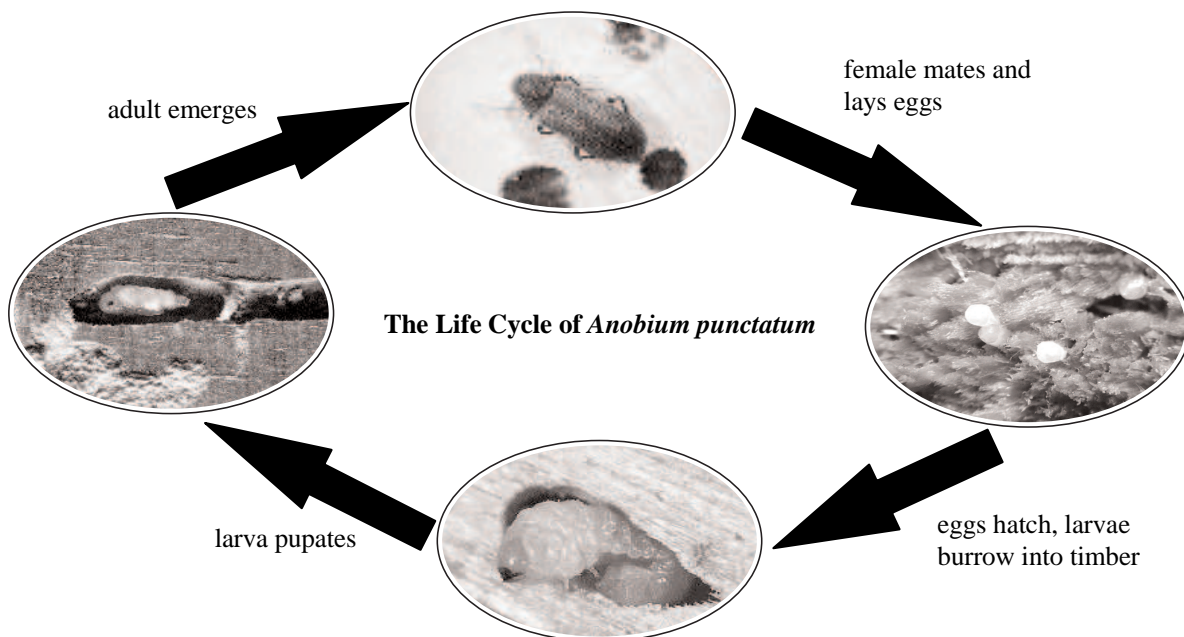
COMMON FURNITURE BEETLE

Most of the damage caused by **wood-boring insects** in buildings in the UK can be attributed to the **Common Furniture Beetle**, *Anobium punctatum*. This beetle is a common insect out of doors and is found throughout the country. In its natural habitat, the common furniture beetle attacks the dead parts of trees; for example, where branches have broken off or where the bark has been removed, thus killing the underlying sapwood.

Despite its common name, *A. punctatum* does not only attack furniture. It is exceedingly common as a pest of any wood indoors. It damages decorative woodwork, tools, musical instruments and, on a very much more serious scale, joinery timbers, flooring and the structural timbers of buildings. A large number of timber species, both softwoods and hardwoods, are susceptible to attack.

Life cycle

There are four distinct stages in the life cycle: egg, larva, pupa and adult. Of these, it is the **larval** stage that causes the extensive damage within wood.



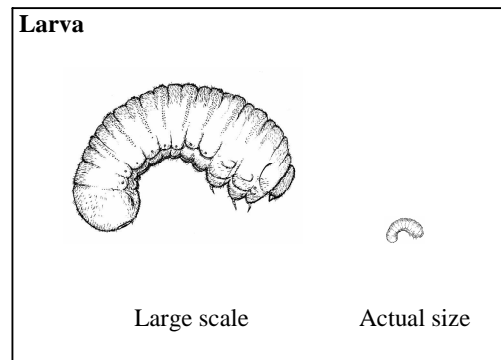
Egg

The eggs are small, white and lemon-shaped. Approximately 0.3mm in diameter, they are just visible to the naked eye. The egg-laying adult female deposits these singly or in small clusters in cracks and crevices within wood, on unplanned timber, on the rough underside of furniture or on the edges of plywood. Old “flight” holes may also be used as egg-laying sites.

During her adult life, the female may lay up to 80 eggs (average about 40) each firmly attached to the wood. The egg develops and hatches in four to five weeks.

Larva

When an egg hatches the young larva immediately burrows through the bottom of the egg, straight into the timber, and continues tunnelling for three to five years, feeding on the wood it excavates and leaving behind bore-dust in the tunnels. This dust or “frass” contains ellipsoidal faecal pellets, characteristic of the insect. Frass may often be pushed out of infested timber by the activity of the larva inside. The larva, or “woodworm” is creamy-white in colour, curved into a “C” shape and covered with short, yellow hairs. The body is soft-skinned and fleshy; the head bears a pair of dark brown jaws. With age, the larva increases in size, growing to 6mm long when fully developed.



Pupa

The mature larva then bores its way almost to the surface of the wood and constructs a pupal chamber. Inside this special chamber the larva changes into a pupa, creamy-white at first, but then gradually darkening. The pupa appears inactive externally, but internally the insect is transforming into an adult. Wing cases, legs and antennae develop and, after six to eight weeks, the fully-formed adult casts its pupal skin.

Adult

The adult beetle emerges from the pupal chamber by biting its way out, leaving a typical “flight” or “exit” hole in the wood. The hole is circular and 1 to 2mm in diameter. Adult beetles emerge mainly between May and August. Very occasionally they may emerge at other times of year. They fly actively, especially in warm, sunny weather. In this way an infestation may spread to unattacked wood, either from place-to-place indoors, or from a tree outside to furniture or structural timber within a building. The beetles are dull reddish to dark brown, 2.5 to 5.0mm in length and covered in fine, short, yellow hairs. The adults do not feed, and live for a maximum of three to four weeks. After mating, the female lays her eggs in a suitable site and the life cycle starts again.

