

Australian pest down but not out in Wellington



Rigorous surveillance of host trees in Wellington's Hataitai Park resulted in only three adult *Peltoschema suturalis* beetles being found on just one wattle tree.

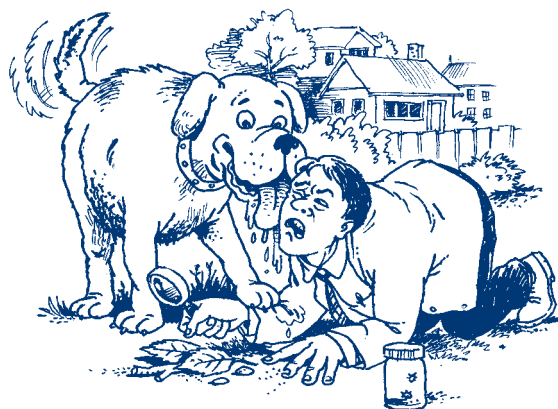
Peltoschema suturalis is a minor insect pest of wattles and is native to Australia. MAF contractors first found the beetle population during a routine survey of Wellington risk sites in October 2000. Up until the November survey, no further evidence of the pest had been found (*Biosecurity* 31:15).

The surveillance zone includes all host trees within a 500 metre radius of the finds, as well as wattles located on some industrial sites around Wellington Airport. It takes the VIGIL, Forest Research contractors four days to inspect the trees for signs of the pest.

Following confirmation of the three beetles, MAF decided to extend the survey zone. A further 90 trees were inspected but no more finds were made. The infested tree and five surrounding host trees were successfully treated with insecticide immediately following the survey.

The insect appears limited to one specific area of Hataitai Park, and MAF will continue to undertake monthly inspections of all identified trees. A full survey will be repeated in October 2002.

Local residents and the Wellington City Council continue to prove very cooperative, which greatly assists with



the survey. Unlike surveys in other residential areas of New Zealand, no dog attacks were reported.

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Subterranean termites: elimination on target



No Australian subterranean termites were found in the latest survey of residential properties in Otorohanga.

Conducted by representatives of MAF, VIGIL and the Australian pest control company, Pestforce, the delimiting survey took place in mid October. Some 28 residential properties and surrounds were inspected, along with wooden monitoring stakes and bait stations located on properties.

Recognition of termite presence requires highly specialist skills, and all the surveyors involved have been trained by Australian termite experts to recognise symptoms of termite presence, such as mud tunnels and blistered wood surfaces.

Overseas observations show that over 50 percent of termite damage is invisible to the human eye.

"Termites are difficult to detect as they start munching deep inside the wood and chew their way outwards", says National Adviser Forest Pest Surveillance

and Response, Mark Ross. "They are blind, and they build mud tunnels in the ground or over surfaces, like termite highways, out of a mixture of dirt, chewed wood and their own droppings."

Results from the survey were comparable to the last survey in October 2000, with no new signs of termites found at any of the inspected properties.

With no activity in the Otorohanga area since February 2000, it appears that MAF's recent response actions, using bait stations, has been successful in eliminating the main colony of termites.

Trapping programme

Over the summer, MAF contractors will be placing insect traps in the Otorohanga area to help determine whether the Australian subterranean termite remains in the vicinity.

Subterranean termites fly in swarms from their colonies each year in a mating ritual



Flying termites (alates).

designed to establish new colonies. Fortunately, none of the infestations found here have been due to termites mating from swarms, with all finds able to be traced back to

an original entry source. The termites are known to have entered New Zealand on timber imported from Australia, namely on utility poles, railway sleepers and posts.

As termites naturally swarm towards a light source, traps will be attached to well lit structures, such as utility poles. Traps will then be checked daily, from 3 December to 31 January 2002.

Trapping results will provide MAF with additional information on the presence of any residual termite population in Otorohanga.

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www.maf.govt.nz/subterranean-termite