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SAPCA'S EXPANDED "BEETLE CLAUSE" OFFERS IMPROVED PROTECTION FOR HOME BUYERS AND BANKS

The South African Pest Control Association has introduced a "full disclosure" approach to wood borer clearance certificates. As this entails a more detailed inspection of the timber in a residential building prior to the signing of a deed of sale, the expanded "beetle clause" would be of significant importance and value, to prospective home-owners, estate agents and banks issuing home loans.

SAPCA vice-president Colin Jardine said they were updating their inspector membership base with regard to these wider-ranging procedures. SAPCA is the only organisation authorised by the department of agriculture to issue registration numbers to qualified inspectors. These registrations confirm that they are approved to do woodborer inspections and make recommendations.

Inspections cover all types of wood destroying insects such as carpenter ants, carpenter bees, borer beetle and termites. Apart from these, supporting information such as wood-rot; pertinently in the coastal areas, and external anomalies, is now also encouraged.

"Anomalies such as the presence of moisture, damp, slope, drainage and positioning may not be directly timber related, but may significantly contribute to the compromise of timbers and structures," Jardine explained.

"As an example, timbers in a renovation project may have been re-used. Where they were previously open and allowed to breathe, they may now be in an enclosed space with no airflow or atmospheric change. This will lead to a change in their characteristics over time and should be considered and reported and treated, where appropriate."

Other features to be examined and noted more clearly; include suspended floors, where cavities are often too small for a visual inspection, timbers covered by carpets and cladding, flat-roofed structures with closed ceilings or insulation panels and boxed eaves and decorative "buttresses".

A clearance certificate will be issued when there is no evidence, of structural significance, of organisms or activity or compromise of the timbers that make up the construction. In cases where structural repairs have to be carried out on compromised timbers, an inspector's approval of the work would be needed.

Jardine said SAPCA registered inspectors have access to documentation and information, which assists them in the discovery process, and that aspects and anomalies discovered, should also be included in their reports. For this purpose new SAPCA clearance certificates should be accompanied by detailed report documentation. If there are no findings or anomalies of significance, a consolidated report confirming this should accompany the certification.

Certificates are numbered and packs of certificates sold to registered individual companies for their use. Their serial numbers are recorded at SAPCA's administrative centre to ensure auditable records of issued certificates. Should there be a query within or after the validity period, the records and detail will be available from SAPCA.