

Keep carpenter bees out of crop storage



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NEWARK, Del. — Has outside of your farm buildings started sounding like an ad for crunchy granola? It could be carpenter bees at work enlarging the tunnels for their young.

Shed ceilings, roof overhangs, redwood fences, and other wooden structures are common nesting sites for this pest.

While damage to the wood from a single bee is slight, over a period of years the activities of numerous bees is certain to cause considerable structural damage, warns University of Delaware extension entomologist Frank Boys. The situation isn't serious until many holes about a half inch

in diameter start to appear in the exposed wood trim.

Carpenter bees are often mistaken for bumble bees. But they have many differences.

Bumble bees are large social bees about a half inch long. They're black and yellow, or black with orange body markings, and their nests are usually underground. For some reason, they also have a fondness for abandoned cars, particularly the seat padding. Bumble bees spend most of their time traveling between their nest and the flowers on which they feed.

Carpenter bees are about the same size as bumble bees, but the top side of their body is nearly bare, with no

areas of yellow hair, so that they have a shiny, black appearance. They also spend time gathering pollen for their young, but unlike bumble bees, they have no pollen baskets on their legs. Male carpenter bees can't sting. Females rarely do.

These pests don't eat the wood they tunnel in, but use the galleries for rearing their young. The female begins by drilling an entrance hole — usually on the vertical surface of the wood. Once the hole is about an inch deep, she makes a right angle turn and starts working with the grain of the wood.

Since any wooden structure, especially an older surface, is subject to carpenter bee attack, it helps to paint wood surfaces as a deterrent to attack, says Boys. Use of non-wooden

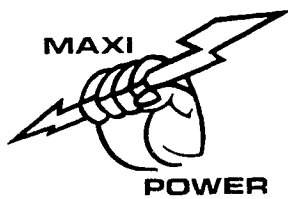
materials like aluminum can also help avoid problems, when building.

A five-percent application of Sevin dust directed into the nest opening aids in control. Treat openings after dark on a cool evening when bees are less active. A plastic squeeze bottle is one way to apply the dust.

After treatment, do not plug the holes, stresses Boys. Let the bees pass freely through the gallery entrance. They'll pick up the dust on their bodies and distribute it inside the tunnels where their young are. Holes can later be filled with plastic wood or caulked and painted, once you're sure the bees are gone.

If you can't reach the hole to apply dust, use a wasp or hornet aerosol that projects the spray several feet.

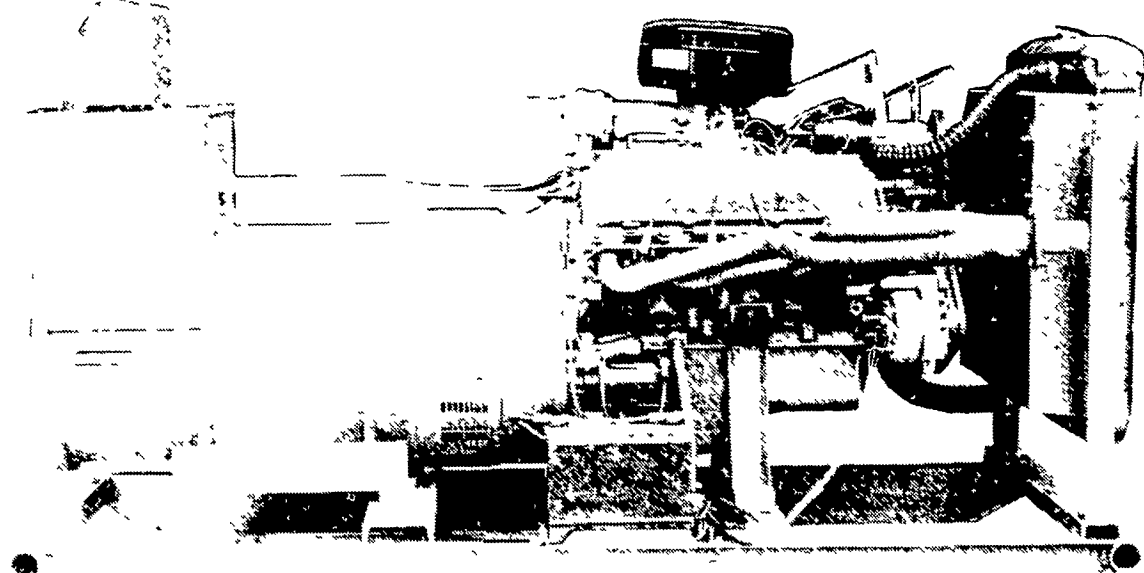
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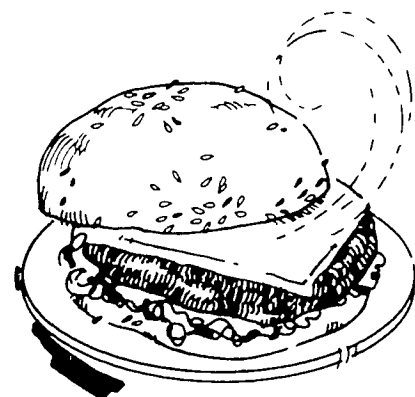
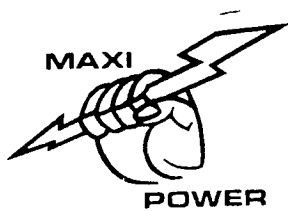
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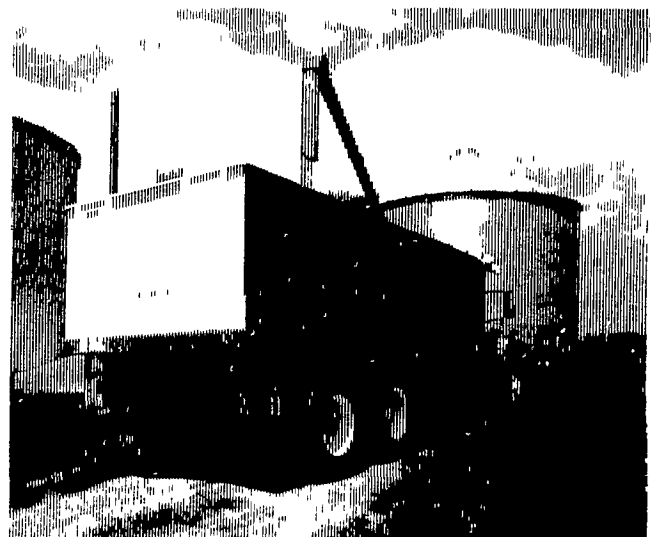
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