

This is a printer friendly version of an article from [www.fosters.com](http://www.fosters.com)  
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

---

Article published Jul 21, 2010

## Forestry officials raise warning of Asian beetle

DOVER — Forestry officials are warning of a wood-munching beetle that can wipe out massive swaths of trees and cost a fortune to eradicate.

The Asian longhorned beetle, a zebra-striped insect that often hitches a ride on firewood, was found in six trees in Boston, Mass. earlier this month.

The discovery came after a larger infestation in Worcester, Mass. that affected 74 square miles and required 24,000 trees to be chopped down. The eradication effort is ongoing and has topped \$250 million.

New Hampshire and Maine officials have taken dramatic steps to prevent a similar episode, including banning campers from bringing in firewood from out of state and spending millions of dollars on a public awareness campaign.

"It's better to be safe than sorry," said Kyle Lombard, an entomologist with the New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands.

Lombard compared an Asian longhorned beetle infestation to a forest fire — albeit a slower-moving one. The beetles do their damage in the larvae stage, eating wood for sustenance and leaving a telltale, quarter-sized exit hole. It can take years for the insects to devour host trees like maple, birch, elm, and horse chestnut, among others.

Their most active months are July and August, when they mature and mate. The beetles burrow so far down in the wood that they are immune to spraying. The most effective way to eradicate them is to chop down a host tree and feed it through a wood chipper.

Officials said an infestation could be especially devastating in Maine and New Hampshire, the first- and second-most forested states in the country, respectively. Forests support many industries, including logging, maple syrup production, and tourism, that contribute billions to the states' economies.

Informing the public is key to prevention, officials said. Nearly all infestations, including the one in Worcester, were discovered by passersby, according to New Hampshire state entomologist Tom Durkis.

"If it hadn't been for those people, the infestations would have been a lot worse," Durkis said. "The more we educate the public, the better."

Lombard said the beetle can inflict a similar amount of damage as chestnut blight, which was introduced to the United States in the early 1900s and led to the near-eradication of the American chestnut tree.

It is believed that the Asian longhorned beetle came to the U.S. on wooden shipping pallets from its native China.

Complicating matters, the fight against the insect is it closely resembles another bug, the harmless, white-spotted sawyer. The only noticeable difference is a white spot on the sawyer's back.

Lombard said his office fields 30 calls a week about reports of an Asian longhorned beetle that turn out to be a white-spotted sawyer.

Forestry officials have a few factors in their favor. The Asian longhorned beetle can't travel far distances, and technology like cell phone cameras and e-mail makes spotting the insect easier.

The ongoing prevention effort includes an awareness campaign conducted by the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension and a planned sign on Interstate 95 near the Massachusetts border warning people not to bring firewood across the border.

"They are dramatic measures, but they won't be fail-safe," said Maine state entomologist Dave Struble.

The firewood ban will also protect against the spread of other invasive insects like the emerald ash borer and diseases like root rot, Struble said.

Officials urged those who come across the Asian longhorned beetle to take a photograph and contact their state forest service.

---