
Identify Dry Rot brittle wood


Identify Dry Rot cotton wool like sheet


Identify Dry Rot red spore

# Dry rot

Dry rot is one of the most damaging conditions you can get in a property.  To grow or flourish, dry rot needs moisture.  This could come from many sources such as a drip from a leaky pipe, rain water from the roof, damaged gutters or down pipes.

Once it starts growing, often unseen, it can inflict serious damage on timber anywhere in a property.  The longer you leave it, the worse it can become with the unfortunate knock on effect of increasing the likely cost of dry rot treatment.

## How dry rot occurs

Dry rot spores are present everywhere to some degree in every home.  On their own they are harmless.  However, if they are given water they will germinate forming a large fluffy cotton wool like fungus.  Once it reaches this stage, dry rot can cause serious harm to a building causing timber to lose its structure and integrity over time.

## How to fix a dry rot problem

A survey will be able to identify the full scope of any dry rot problem.  Using specialist surveying tools the progress of any dry rot infestations can be checked in concealed areas within a property.  If a survey reveals the presence of dry rot then the dry rot treatment recommended will depend on the severity of the dry rot outbreak.

# What is dry rot

What is dry rot?  In a nutshell, dry rot is a wood destroying fungus that digests parts of the wood which give the timber strength and stiffness.

It is a fungus that eats away at the cellulose component within wood turning it brown and ultimately reducing the timber to a dry and crumbly state with noticeable cuboidal fractures.

## What is dry rot – how it is caused

It is caused when dampness combined with lack of ventilation provides the ideal conditions for fungal attack.  It can affect all types of property, historic or modern and can grow within the cracks and cavities in the walls feeding off debris and wood behind the plaster.

## What is the difference between dry rot and wet rot?

The physical difference that identifies dry rot and identifies wet rot, the main difference is that dry rot does not need to be near the source of moisture to grow while wet rot has to be close to the source of moisture. Wet rot is also not as destructive as dry rot and is easier to treat.

## What to do about dry rot

Because dry rot is such a serious problem, it is important to treat the issue as soon as possible.  Without treating the dry rot, it will live and grow, feeding off and destroying the timbers in your property in order to live with serious consequences to the structural integrity of the property.

If you do suspect dry rot and you are unsure what to do about it then it is certainly advisable to speak to a dry rot specialist and organise a dry rot property survey.

# Dry rot lifecycle

Dry rot is a living and growing fungus which feeds off and destroys timber in order to live.  There are four main stages in the dry rot lifecycle.  One thing to note is that if you do have a dry rot issue, it is important when considering dry rot treatment to choose a specialist familiar with the dry rot lifecycle and is experienced & qualified with recognising and suggesting the most appropriate treatment solution.

## 4 main dry rot lifecycle stages

The 4 main dry rot lifecycle stages are as follows:

1. **Spore -** Dry rot lifecycle begins as a tiny spore. These spores are omnipresent and one alone is practically invisible to the naked eye. In very large numbers dry rot spores appear as a fine orange brown dust. These spores will remain inactivated unless combined with timber and moisture.  When combined with timber it is likely dry rot treatment would be required to prevent further spread.
2. **Hyphae -** Where timber and moisture are present the spore will begin to grow. The spore produces very fine white strands not unlike cobwebs. These strands, known as hyphae, allow the dry rot fungus to grow by feeding on the timber. Where it can do this fungus will go on to produce increasingly more strands. It is through this process that the fungus breaks the structure of the timber down thus removing its strength bringing about the Mycelium on the third stage of the dry rot lifecycle. Specialist dry rot treatment will be required to stop this in its tracks
3. **Mycelium -** One spore never exists alone meaning that when one germinates, several others will too, causing further dry rot problems. The resulting hyphae mass is known as mycelium. Mycelium can travel some distance in search of timber and it is this ability to grow over some distance and a variety of materials, which allows an outbreak to progressively destroy the structural timbers of an entire building if left undetected. Specialist dry rot treatment will be required to eradicate the outbreak.
4. **Fruiting Body -** In suitable conditions, dry rot mycelium will continue to exist and grow at a considerable rate within a building. Fungi prefers dark and damp areas with little or no air movement, therefore where these conditions change and threaten the fungus, its natural response is to create a fruiting body (sporophore). This mushroom-like form is the fungi's response to a threat to its survival and its function is to pump out spores into the atmosphere that can be transferred by air currents to other susceptible areas within the building allowing them to germinate and create a new attack of dry rot, thus bringing us back to the beginning of the dry rot lifecycle. Specialist dry rot treatment will be required to inhibit this.

## 1. Spore

Begins as a tiny spore that remain inactive until they combine with timber and moisture.

## 2. Hyphae

Spores begin to grow and produce fine white strands. These allow dry rot to grow. Fungues begins to break down the timber.

## 3. Mycelium

More than one spore will always germinate, the resulting product is mycelium. It can travel some distance in search of timber to attack.

## 4. Fruiting Body

The mushroom fruiting body is a natural defence system that is formed when there is a change in the atmosphere. Spores are pumped out into the atmosphere.