

# NYC Officials Battle Longhorned Beetles

May 13, 2005 — By Associated Press



NEW YORK — Polka-dotted 1.5-inch bullet-shaped beetles and parks officials are going head-to-head in a battle for the city's trees. Two Central Park trees found infested with the Asian longhorned beetle were chopped down on Wednesday and were to be burned in a bid to destroy the eggs buried in the wood, parks department spokeswoman Dana Rubinstein said.

The infected American elms were found within blocks of each other along Fifth Avenue on the perimeter of Central Park. They were discovered by U.S. Department of Agriculture officials who have searched for the bugs in 1,315 park trees since mid-March, the parks department said in a statement.

"The Asian longhorned beetle poses a potentially devastating threat to our urban canopy," Department of Parks and Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe said in the statement.

The shiny black beetle with white spots is not harmful to humans or animals but has caused thousands of trees in New York to be cut down since it appeared in Brooklyn in 1996. It threatens approximately 50 percent of all New York City trees, including maples, elms, birches, and sycamores, according to national forest service estimates, Rubinstein said.

The beetles eat tunnels through the trees, then pregnant females lay eggs in the bark. The young beetles consume the host trees from the inside.

More than 78,000 trees in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and Long Island are being preventively treated with a pesticide that poisons adult beetles before they can lay eggs, according to the March quarterly report for the beetle eradication program. The pesticide, imidacloprid, is also used in treatments against lawn grubs and pet fleas, the report said.

This year, the parks department statement said, officials have found 48 infested trees -- two in Central Park, 11 in Brooklyn, one in Queens and 34 in Massapequa. Last year, 66 infested trees were found within the city limits.

The latest discoveries bring the number of infested trees in New York state to 6,232, of which almost 4,000 have been in Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens.

The federal government has spent about \$122 million fighting the bugs' spread in New York City since 1997, Rubinstein said.

Experts believe the beetle hitchhiked to the United States on wooden packing material from China.

Source: *Associated Press*