



THATCHERS ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA DEKKERSVERENIGING VAN SUID-AFRIKA

Newsletter 1/2022

28 January 2022

NEWSLETTER

We are facing this new year with better prospects for a more prosperous year than the one left behind as the signs are there that all restrictions will be lifted soon. The confidence is expressed that every member will have the courage, confidence and the necessary recourses to make use of opportunities that will come their way.

Our financial year ends on 28 February 2022 and we would like to thank every member who has already renewed their 2022 membership. Without your loyal support, we will not be able to achieve what the public and industry expect of us.

HAVE YOU SEEN ONE OF THESE BEFORE?

Inquiry received from Mr. David Pretorius of Con-Thatch

Some of the "worms" are falling from a roof we covered early last year and we were wondering if you heard of anyone else who may have experienced the same as there is no clarity as to whether the "worms" are currently in season is and whether it may be due to the many rains.

According to the attached document, it is harmless.



Malachiine larvae

Female Nepachys sp.

The sight of a bright reddish insect larva may leave one feeling slightly uncomfortable. However, knowing what it is, and what it might be doing, can make a difference to one's perception and how one views it in future. Time spent in the laboratory, rearing such larvae, has provided fascinating insight.

Two malachiine larvae captured in the bathroom of a home, a *Nepachys* species and a *Urodactylus* sp., were reared from the larval to the adult stage by feeding them dead, dry insects. Larvae of this group are usually bright reddish or pink in colour, and in this particular *Nepachys* species, about 7mm long. The head capsule and the forked appendage at the tip of the abdomen are dark brown.

During the rearing process it was discovered that the pupae have the same reddish or pink colour as the larvae. Once the beetles emerged from the pupal stage, an identifying link could be made between the larval and adult soft-winged flower beetles (family Melyridae, subfamily Malachiinae). A large number of different species of these small (about 1.4 to 8mm) beetles occur in southern Africa. About 22 genera and over 175 species have already been described from our subregion. Many of these beetles are brightly coloured, and sexual dimorphism is marked in certain groups—males having strangely shaped heads and antennae and, sometimes, projections and indentations on the wing covers. They are usually predacious and often found on vegetation, especially in flowers, where they may also feed on pollen. Larvae usually occur in soil, leaf litter and under bark, where they are known to feed on adult and larval insects, as well as other

invertebrates. Although they are usually predacious, they will also scavenge on dead insects and other arthropods.

Owing to the strange colour of the larvae, one may be inclined to regard them with suspicion or unease. They are often observed in the home, particularly if there is an open window adjacent to garden vegetation. Numerous concerned owners of thatch roofed houses have submitted malachiine larvae to the South African National Collection of Insects for identification. However, their presence in thatch or in the home is probably advantageous, as they are either preying on live arthropods or scavenging on dead ones. So, although they may not be a particularly welcome sight in your home, please tolerate them instead of killing them. These small predators / scavengers will cause you no harm.

For more information contact:
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Advice received from Mr. André Friis of Letaba Thatchers

Mr. Friis said that thatch they exported in the past was first treated with Methyl Bromide, (while it was already in the container) for any insects that may be present in the thatch. Here is a description of Methyl Bromide.

What is methyl bromide used for?

Methyl bromide is an odorless, colorless gas used to control a wide variety of pests in agriculture and shipping, including fungi, weeds, insects, nematodes (or roundworms), and rodents. Agricultural growers inject methyl bromide about two feet into the ground to sterilize the soil before crops are planted.

Is methyl bromide harmful to humans?

*Exposure may occur during fumigation activities. **Methyl bromide is highly toxic.** Studies in humans indicate that the lung may be severely injured by the acute (short-term) inhalation of methyl bromide. Acute and chronic (long-term) inhalation of methyl bromide can lead to neurological effects in humans.*

Advice received from Mr. John Smith of Biggarsberg Thatchers

If your roof has been thatched by a well-qualified professional, chances are that it will not require frequent maintenance at all, but it can be home to a variety of uninvited guests.

SOLUTION

NUPRO is an excellent product and birds can eat the dead insects without consequences. It is extremely important to work out the right cubic meters of air space in the building and treat accordingly. Newspaper or plastic should also be placed under every can. It is effective in the treatment of geckoes, mosquitoes, booklice, beetles, cockroaches, springtails, etc.

Booklice



Springtail.



Interaction with our members is highly appreciated and we would like to encourage you to send in contributions and photos that can even be posted on our Facebook page.

Kind regards



André Friis

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