



THATCHERS ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA DEKKERSVERENIGING VAN SUID-AFRIKA

Newsletter 5/2013

NEWSLETTER

15 July 2013

Dear TASA member

ARE THE DAYS OF THATCHED ROOFS COUNTED?

An alarming trend that is becoming more common is the replacement of thatched roofs with tiles. Mr Bertus Nieuwenhuis of Recon Thatchers sent photos (below) and writes as follows: "I spent the weekend driving through Honeydew, past the Coca-Cola Dome. More than half the townhouses' thatched roofs were replaced with tiles. This displayed a very negative image."



The TASA office received more disturbing inquiries since the beginning of 2013 from homeowners inquiring about contractors who can replace their thatched roofs with Harvey, or ordinary clay tiles.

Great ignorance exists in the Thatching Industry about the proper method to service thatched roofs. The problem is greatly exacerbated by homeowners who employ people from the street to comb the roof by pulling thatch out, to cut it and to push it back.

Roofs that were thatched with immature grass full of seeds and leaves, harvested during the growing season which protective resin layer has not formed to protect the thatch against moisture intrusion, are causing major problems; especially if these roofs contain sisalation which causes condensation. Furthermore, some roofs are even treated with a chemical without servicing the roof properly beforehand.

Complaints regarding thatched roofs leaking like sieves after the owner "has done everything in his power through combing and spraying the roof with a chemical to glue the thatch together so it will not leak" are not unusual. These clients had enough of thatched roofs and they are trying to rid themselves of it as soon as possible.

To address this problem, the proper servicing of a thatched roof is included in the revised SANS 10407:2013 (Thatched Construction specification) with explanatory photos.

Servicing of thatch roofs

B.1 An unqualified Thatcher should not comb a roof. The user needs to understand the technical detail of a thatch roof before allowing an unqualified Thatcher to comb a roof. Every combing process unless properly done, reduces the cover over the sway (i.e. the functional thickness of a roof and therefore the lifespan of the roof). For functional thickness see figure B.1.

B.2 The correct procedure is to inspect the general length of the thatch or reed; if found long enough, the next step is to pull down the thatch layers (see figure 1).

B.3 The binding twine then needs to be tightened on the underside of the roof (see figure 2). Only then can the combing process begin.

NOTE It is advisable that this process be successfully completed and that no shortcuts are taken.

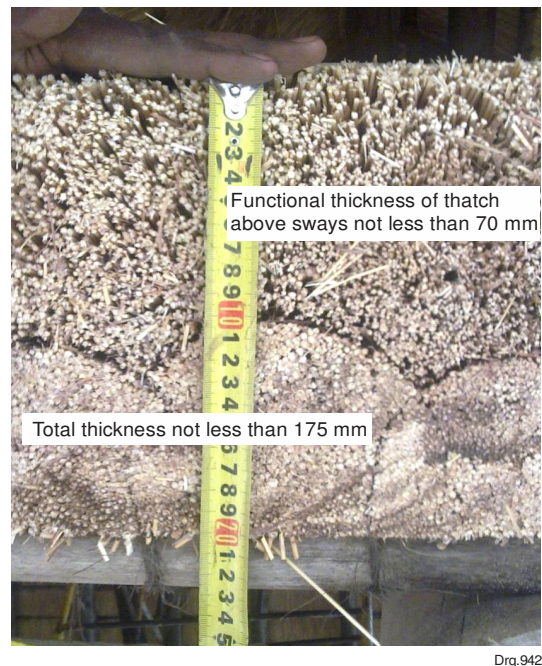


Figure B.1 — Thatching roof thickness

B.4 Figure B.2(a) shows the incorrect thickness of the thatch, which shortens the lifespan of a thatched roof. Figure B.2(b) shows the correct thickness of the thatch which ensures a longer lifespan for a thatched roof. The lifespan of the roof has a direct bearing on the length of the stem below the twine.



a) Thickness of the thatch for a shortened life span



b) Thickness of the thatch for a longer life span

Figure B.2 — Lifespan of a thatched roof

B.5 The lifespan of a thatched roof must be controlled during the thatching process and must be maintained. Care should be taken when 300 mm in common thatching grass is exceeded, due to the fact that the roof could be prone to wind damage.

B.6 Figure B.3(a) shows the method of pulling down the thatch layers. Figure B.3(b) shows the method of tightening the twine after the pulling down of the outer layer of bundles.



a) Pulling down of the thatch layers of a thatched roof



b) Twine tightening on a thatched roof

Figure B.3 — Thatching maintenance

Articles in Magazines

During the next two months, extensive articles will be published in the "Timber IQ," "Design & Build" and "Handyman" magazines to inform the public of the Thatchers Association and even to bring Thatching Contractors, who are not members of the TASA, up to date with specification requirements.

A Guide to Thatching in South Africa

As promised at the last Annual General Meeting urgent attention is given to the compilation of a proper manual. It may be available electronically and in hard copy. The Thatching Industry in general is in danger because of great ignorance and malpractice. It is the responsibility of the TASA and its members to get the Industry back on track.

Thatched roofs constructed without approved plans

Thatched roof owners whose roofs were erected before 2004, are experiencing more and more problems with the expenses of insurance claims and the sale of their properties. The SANS 10407:2004 was the first specification for thatch roofs and many roofs which were built before this date, do not meet the specification requirements. Many roofs are also not signed off by a competent person.

The TASA urges its members to become acquainted with Municipal and legal requirements to prevent problems later for customers resulting from Regulations which were not followed.

U-value tables

The results of the tests conducted by the Thermal Testing Laboratory to determine the U-value of thatch were received. The tables as applicable to each climatic region, will be compiled.

Members and all interested parties will be placed in possession of this information as soon as possible.

Kind regards

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