

PREVENTIVE SPRAYING FOR IPS BEETLES

WHAT IS AN “IPS”? – Ips beetles, also known as “engraver beetles”, are native bark beetles that attack and kill stressed pines and spruce. We have 11 species in Colorado. Those in ponderosa pine, pinyon pine, and Colorado blue spruce are most important. They need stressed trees. Things like drought create stress.

WHAT TO SPRAY? – Two materials are registered for this practice, carbaryl and permethrin. Only certain formulations mention “bark beetles”, “wood boring insects”, “engraver beetles”, “ips beetles”. Be sure to use one of these products at the rates specified for these groups.

WHEN TO SPRAY? – Since ips beetles can be active during the warm months when daily highs consistently reach 50 degrees or more F, adults can be attacking trees from April thru October in Colorado. Preventive applications should occur late March-early April and about 6 months later (August-early September).

HOW TO SPRAY? – These insects attack by boring thru the bark of larger diameter trunk and branch wood. Since ips beetle species can attack material as small as 1 inch in diameter, to ensure complete protection, all wood greater than this size needs to be soaked to the point of runoff. This is not always practical and even the best applications leave areas of untreated bark. Beetle attacks are often initiated in bark cracks, making complete coverage all the more difficult. **FOLLOW THE LABEL** for rates. The most difficult part of preventive applications is covering the upper crowns. This is particularly true of tall trees.

WHICH TREES SHOULD BE SPRAYED? – In general this practice is **ONLY** for high-value pine and spruce. It is not meant to be a forest-wide practice. Thinning and other silvicultural practices that improve the vigor of individual trees are better used for treatment of acreages. Thus, in most cases, the 5 or 10 trees nearest the house or trees with exceptional value for other reasons are the normal candidates for preventive spraying.

WHO CAN DO THE SPRAYING? – Commercial applicators normally do this work. It could also be done by homeowners with a means of treating trees correctly. Due to the size of most high-value pines and spruce, pressurized equipment is necessary or the applicator must have some means of getting into the upper crown (ladder, bucket truck, etc.). Since some permethrin formulations are “Restricted-Use”, only Certified Applicators can buy them. Follow all label safety precautions.

QUESTIONS? – For more info about the beetle or questions on spraying, contact your local Colorado State Forest Service office, CSU Cooperative Extension office, USFS office, or certified arborist.