

Pest Inspections and Home Inspections: Not Quite the Same Thing:

In my opinion, a Home Inspection is incomplete without including a Structural Pest Inspection. While Home Inspections and Pest Inspections are two completely separate documents many of their reported issues overlap. Pest Inspectors do not comment on mechanical systems but they do comment on water intrusion issues and infestation issues. Home Inspectors are not allowed to comment on pest issues (wood destroying organisms) but we are required to comment on water intrusion issues. Water intrusion issues are an important part of Pest Inspections. While the reports are different in nature they do compliment each other to the benefit of the Buyer. Together they will provide better information than if each is taken separately. I always recommend a pest inspection be performed on a prospective purchase even if there is no contractual requirement for a pest inspection. Some homes are sold "As Is" for cash and do not have the usual lender requirement for a Pest Report. In these instances the Real Estate Agent should advise their Client to obtain a Structural Pest Report to limit their liability and best serve their customer.

The Pest Inspection Company to be used for the Pest Inspection is identified in the purchase contract. The Pest Inspection company to be used can be negotiated prior to signing the purchase contract. It is important that the Buyer's Agent be informed as to the nature of the company selected. I have learned from experience that there are "Listing Inspection Companies" and "Buyer's Inspections Companies." While each Registered Structural Pest Control Company is governed by strict standards, each company takes on the personality of the company's management. Some companies receive their work from agents who want a minimum inspection. These companies count on receiving continued work for providing a minimum inspection but do not best serve the interests of the Buyer. On the other hand there are companies who provide a more inclusive pest inspection, which I characterize as "Buyers Inspections" who routinely discover an increased number of infestation issues. I have had instances where I have discovered water intrusion issues that were missed repeatedly by a particular pest company. Once an Agent becomes aware of the differences in the quality of the pest reports it becomes very clear which companies should be recommended. I recommend all Agents be informed of the qualifications, experience and personality of the local structural pest inspection companies in order to protect themselves from possible "negligent referral" actions.

Another issue I have experienced is that a Listing Agent may know a particular system on a home that is infested or water damaged. Usually it is the Listing Agent who orders the Pest Inspection and uses this opportunity to exclude various garages, out buildings, decks, or patio covers from the pest report. The Pest Inspector can only proceed on the instructions given; they have no way of knowing what the purchase contract requires and must rely on the Listing Agent for proper guidance. I always recommend that the Buyer review the purchase contract to be sure the pest report includes all the components listed in the purchase contract. I routinely find water intrusion issues in out buildings or other peripheral systems that were excluded on the pest inspection but were required on the purchase contract. In addition, only the pest inspection company named in the contract

should be providing the pest report. Any changes in the selection of the pest company must be agreed to in writing.

It is important that the Buyer understands exactly what buildings or systems are included in the Pest Report by the purchase contract. It is important that the Buyer understands what a pest inspection includes and what it does not include. Buyers should be aware that there are Section 1 and Section 2 items in structural pest reports. Section 1 items are issues of current damage or infestation and are usually required to be repaired by the lender prior to funding a purchase loan. Section 2 items are issues that may lead to future infestation or damage and are not usually required to be repaired by lender. Sometimes specialty loans require Section 2 items to be repaired the lender. It is important that the Buyer's Agent be informed as to the type of loan the Buyers are intending to obtain in order to be sure if the Section 2 items will need to be repaired prior to funding so that it can be included in the purchase contract. It is customary for sellers to pay for the Section 1 repairs and sometimes the Section 2 repairs prior to close of escrow.

All current Pest Inspection Reports on the property must be disclosed to the Buyer. Occasionally there will be two pest inspections on the same property in a very short period of time. More than once I have discovered two pest inspection tags from different companies on the same home only several days apart. One time, when I brought this to the attention of my Client it was discovered that the Listing Agent had found the first report as being too picky and ordered a second report from another "Lister Friendly" company. The first report was never disclosed to my Client. This was a blatant example of misrepresentation and manipulation by the Listing Agent. My Client and the Buyer's Agent was very upset by this and passed on this home. There could have been a complaint made against the Listing Agent's license through the Department of Real Estate but to my knowledge it was never pursued. All the reports must be disclosed to the Buyer, not just the one with most favorably reported issues.

Home Inspectors routinely discover dead animals in the crawlspace or the attic. This is rarely reported by a pest inspection but routinely reported in a home inspection as a health safety issue. There is the possibility of anthrax being present in the soil under dead animals along with other health safety issues. Dead animals require the removal by a qualified specialist. Another important related issue is the discovery of rodent droppings; particularly in air supply ducts. At its worst rodent droppings can produce the deadly Hanta Virus, which is an important respiratory health safety issue. When the rodent feces turns into dust it can be distributed though out the home causing allergic reactions, respiratory problems, and possible immunological problems. The standard recommendation is for the area to be evaluated and cleaned by a qualified environmental specialist. These symptoms sometimes combine with mold issues to compound the health problems. On one house I found bats in the attic. Upon disclosing this to my Client I learned her husband had been bitten in her previous house by a rabid bat. The husband contracted rabies and died. She was devastated at my findings but to my surprise proceeded with the purchase anyway. She had the bats professionally removed and occupied the home. Upon learning of her experience I was shaken and her Agent was mortified. My point being is that the pest inspector is very specific to wood

destroying organisms and is not required to report on animals or animal droppings. Pest does not include animal related issues, it means wood destroying issues.

Always use an inspector who is a member of the California Real Estate Inspection Association to be sure the Standards of Practice are followed.

If you have any questions about my comments or anything else regarding Home Inspections I can be emailed at HomeInspect2020@aol.com >.

Brad Deal
20/20 Home Inspections
Inspector Member CREIA
209-613-1430