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The Emerald Ash Borer Confirmed in Northeast Kansas

You may have heard of a destructive invasive pest known as the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) that is devastating ash trees across the US. The EAB can infect species of North American Ash trees and is a death sentence for the trees unless treated. It has killed over 10 million trees across the U.S. in the past 20 years and continues to expand its geographic region.

Recently, Ryan Rastok of the Kansas Forest Service reported the EAB in 13 counties of Northeast Kansas: Atchison, Brown, Doniphan, Douglas, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Leavenworth, Miami, Osage, Shawnee, and Wyandotte. We believe the presence of these beetles is not limited to these counties, and residents of Northeast Kansas should report suspected EAB infestations to the Kansas Forest Service by calling 785-532-3300 or sending an email to Rastok directly at rrastok@ksu.edu.

To determine if the EAB has made your ash tree its new home, look for symptoms on the bark and in the canopy. Woodpeckers find the EAB larva quite tasty, so look for light patches of bark and woodpecker holes. The larva tunnel under the bark and feast on the cambium, the layer just below the bark responsible for water and nutrient movement in the tree. Their feeding can cause splits in the bark with S-shaped tunnels underneath. As the tree loses its ability to access nutrients and water, branches of the tree will start to die off.

If you notice the EAB in your ash tree, you need to act quickly to save it. The tree may survive for a few years, but when the tree has lost over 50% of its canopy, the odds of survival even with treatment are very low. Treatments for the EAB include trunk injection, soil drench, or bark spray. These treatments will need to be applied on a regular basis for the rest of the tree's life. Bark injections can provide up to three years of protection but is best applied every other year. Before going out to treat the trees yourself, we recommend talking to a licensed pesticide applicator. The treatments you can find over the counter will not be as effective as those provided by a licensed applicator.

To find out more information about the EAB or report an infestation, contact either the Kansas Forest Service or your local Extension Office.