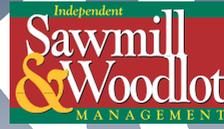


# Ask@

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**Q** I have these dark lines running along the lumber. What are they and what did we do wrong in drying? Thanks.



**A** This defect is called white rot or sometimes fungal decay or spalting. The fungi in the white rot family take months to infect wood and create these black zone lines. These fungi also require very wet conditions and warm weather. So, the initial infection occurs in the standing tree or in logs left in the woods or stored in the log yard for months. Once sawn into lumber, you might aggravate the existing rot if you store the lumber without stickering in warm weather, but you will not start new rot. NOTE THAT WHITE ROT QUICKLY WEAKENS THE WOOD, so white rot is unacceptable in hardwoods and softwoods, especially structural softwoods. So, avoid long storage of wet wood in warm weather.

**Q** We have honeycomb in our 6/4 red oak, but it is always at the ends of the lumber, running around 8 to 12 inches from the ends. We know our humidity was well controlled in the kiln. Help please!

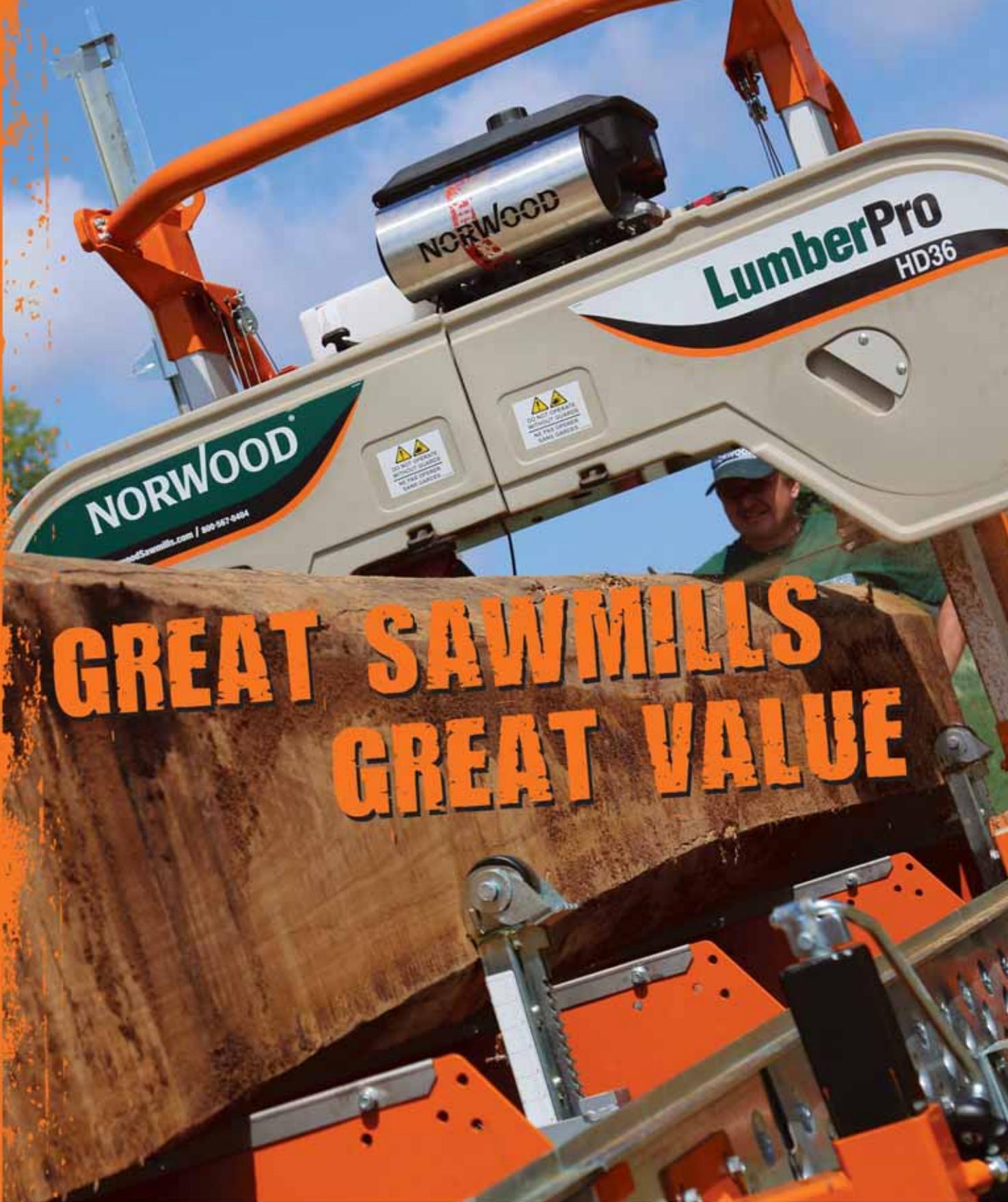


**A** This end defect is, indeed, honeycomb and occurs in almost all species of thicker lumber. All honeycomb in a normal drying situation is a surface check or end check first that then worsens even with normal drying conditions. (Ever split firewood? Did you notice how easy it is to split the piece once the wedge has started? Same thing with a small check—it's easy to worsen). As your defect is associated with the ends of the lumber, what you have are end checks that formed probably within the first week of drying, or maybe in the log before sawing. As the checks increased their length in the interior, forming honeycomb, the end itself had the initial checks closed, so the lumber, when visually inspected, looked perfect. The solution for preventing end honeycomb is to end coat the lumber ASAP, maybe even end coating the log before sawing. Quality end coating, if applied soon enough and thick enough (two coats), will prevent all drying-related end checks, so end honeycomb cannot occur.

**Q** We have some ash lumber that developed some tiny holes in it during air drying. Is this the dreaded powderpost beetle?

**A** Good news...No! Ash is prone to attacks from the ambrosia beetle. Although it is in the powderpost family, this insect only likes wet wood. It also can hatch, bore in the wood, mature from a worm into a beetle, and leave the wood with 1/16-inch-diameter holes, breed and lay eggs in new lumber three times a year. Oftentimes, the holes have a light grey ring around them caused by the ambrosia fungi that are food for the babies. Insecticides can work if you are lucky enough to apply them on the right day, but better control is to eliminate ALL wood debris in the air yard and run all stickers and 4 x 4s through the kiln at 133°F internal wood temperature in order to sanitize these products.

Gene Wengert answered this month's questions. Please submit any questions you might have to [Ask@sawmillmag.com](mailto:Ask@sawmillmag.com). One of our authors will answer selected questions each month.



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