



Buying a house?

With the huge variety of homes on offer in New Zealand, a good proportion of them are of sound and water tight construction, but there are also a reasonable proportion that are potential disasters. There are some construction types that are more susceptible to leaking, but poor workmanship and bad design can cause problems in any building type

Some of the common types of construction regarded as suspicious are

- Monolithic cladding
- Fiber cement sheeting (plastered over)
- Inset second story decks that are above lower floor rooms
- Lack of, or insufficient flashings over windows and doors
- Roof with no eaves
- Flat roof
- Roof flashings into the side of second story walls

Slow leaking water pipes and waste pipes can also cause internal rot over the years. If you sign an agreement to purchase without making it conditional on a satisfactory thermal imaging leak detection report, then you are exposing your family to extreme risk.

Thermal imaging surveys look at the inside of all external walls and ceilings, seeing them in false colour infrared. Under most conditions, any areas holding excessive moisture will be visible as a darker area in the picture and easily seen. Areas of suspicion are then tested using a non invasive moisture meter to establish the actual moisture content. As a matter of course during an inspection, we automatically use the moisture meter in all areas where experience has shown as being high risk of leaks such as under windows, below decks, etc. There can occasionally be circumstances where a false reading can occur such as having metal within the wall, (which will show a high moisture reading) but these will normally be initially mistaken for moisture until ruled out with other tests, rather than cause genuine moisture to be missed.

We also have the ability to conduct invasive moisture tests, but this is never done without full discussion and approval from the owner. The invasive test involves the use of a device that has two thin probes that are driven through the plasterboard to make contact with the timber framing. The holes left as a result of this test can be likened to a small snake bite, leaving two small holes (about the size that a picture hook might make) and set about 40 mm apart. These are wherever possible done close to skirting boards or architraves and often barely visible. I would stress again that this is never done without full consultation. You can't count on the real estate agent pointing out problems to you and in most cases leaks and excessive moisture are not visible to the naked eye.

We have seen many examples of people having their and their families lives devastated by finding that they have a leaky home.

The risk is all yours. Don't get caught.