

dry rot | dry-rot, n.

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1. A decayed condition of timber in confined situations, in which it becomes brittle and crumbles to a dry powder; caused by various fungi, esp. species of *Polyporus* and *Merulius*, or by slow chemical processes. Also applied to any fungus causing this.

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1795 (title) Some Observations on the Distemper in Timber called the Dry Rot.

1803 J. PAPWORTH (title) An Essay on the Cause of the Dry Rot in Buildings; with some Observations on the Cure of the Dry Rot, by the Admission of Air into the Parts of Buildings affected with that Disease.

1830 J. LINDLEY *Introd. Nat. Syst. Bot.* 337 Of parasitical Fungi, the most important are those which are called dry rot.

ca1835 J. MACCULLOCH *Proofs & Illustr. Attributes God* (1837) III. xlii. 121 The far greater number of these imaginary cases of dry-rot are no other than this, the usual chemical decomposition of the hard vegetable fibre.

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2. *fig.* A state of hidden or unsuspected moral or social decay tending to disintegration.

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1821 *Examiner* 91/1 A species of political dry rot is pervading the whole community.

1881 W. PHILLIPS in C. Martyn *Life* (1890) 586 The dry-rot of legislative corruption.

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DERIVATIVES

dry-rot *v.* (*trans.*) to affect with dry rot.

1870 J. R. LOWELL *Among my Bks.* (1873) 1st Ser. 223 They are dry-rotting the very fibre of will and conscience.

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dry-rotten *adj.* decayed with dry rot.

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1818 J. BENTHAM *Church-of-Englandism* 359 (*note*), The more completely and notoriously dry-rotten the whole fabric, the more money would be called for..for the support of it.

1883 *American* 74 Swept away as incapable and dry-rotten.

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