



Bed and Bat Bugs

Introduction

From fossil remains in ancient Egypt, we know that the common bed bug, *Cimex lectularis*, has troubled humans in their sleep for at least 3550 years. Both males and females of this nocturnal species feed exclusively on animal blood. Besides humans, bed bugs bite dogs, cats, birds, rodents and bats. They are not known to transmit diseases, but as they feed, bed bugs inject a substance that can cause irritation, welts, swelling and extreme itching in sensitive individuals.



Bed Bug

Modern sanitation and pesticides have reduced the incidence of bed bug problems in homes, but *Cimex lectularis* and related species still can and do infest New Hampshire households. Because they are small and shy, bed bugs (or their eggs) may be moved readily into a home in used mattresses, bedding, furniture, curtains and rugs; in the luggage or in the clothing of visiting travelers, or from the nests of squirrels, mice, birds or bats that inhabit the eaves, walls or attics of a home.

Some telltale signs of bed bug infestation include bloodstains or dark spots of excrement on sheets and pillowcases, and a sweet, musty odor some compare to the smell of fresh red raspberries.

Description and life cycle

Adult bed bugs are 1/4 to 5/8-inch long, oval and flattened, dull reddish-brown to mahogany in color. The upper body surface is nearly translucent, with a crinkled appearance. After a blood meal, a bed bug's body becomes swollen and turns brick red.

Bed bugs have piercing-sucking mouthparts, with a three-segmented proboscis (beak) fitting into a groove beneath the head and extending between the front legs. Their antennae have three long, thin segments and a fourth, short segment next to the head. Though bed bugs have short, stubby wings, they cannot fly.

At room temperature and with access to hosts for regular feedings, female bed bugs may lay as many as 200 eggs – two or more per day over two months - secreting a special cement that glues the eggs to cracks and crevices in floors or bed frames. The eggs are white and pear-shaped, about 1/32-inch long, with a cap at one end. The eggs hatch in one or two weeks at room temperature, up to a month at lower temperatures. Nymphs – young bed bugs – resemble adults, except they are smaller and nearly colorless, becoming darker as they mature. Nymphs molt five times before reaching maturity. Bed bugs may pass through several generations each year. If no hosts are present, adult bed bugs may survive as long as a year without feeding.

Bats in an attic may host a large population of a different species of bed bug called the bat bug, which can migrate down into the living area. If you have positively identified “bed bugs” in your home, make sure to check the attic for bats and take steps to eliminate them from your home too while you get the bat bugs under control. For more information on controlling bats in your attic or living space, call Wildlife Services at (603) 223-6832.

Control

Although homeowners can buy many products that will control bed bugs, UNH Cooperative Extension recommends hiring a professional pest control company if you suspect your home is infested with this pest. Bed bugs are difficult to locate and control; eradication may require more than one pesticide application.

Under state law, apartment dwellers may not treat their living quarters with insecticides to control bed bugs; in most instances, apartment owners may not apply insecticides inside the apartments they own unless they are certified pesticide applicators. If you have questions about bed bug control in an apartment you rent or own, call the New Hampshire Division of Pesticide Control at (602) 271-3550.

Drawing from University of Nebraska website: <http://lancaster.unl.edu/enviro/pest/factsheets/263-95.htm>

***Stop!** This publication contains pesticide recommendations that are subject to change at any time. UNH Cooperative Extension provides these recommendations only as a guide. It is always the pesticide applicator’s responsibility, by law, to read and follow all current label directions for the specific pesticide being used. Because of constantly changing labels and product registration, some of the recommendations offered in this publication may no longer be legal by the time you read them. Contact the NH Division of Pesticide Control at (603) 271-3550 to check registration status. If any information in these recommendations disagrees with the label, you must disregard the recommendations and follow the label directions. No endorsement is intended for products mentioned, nor criticism intended for products not mentioned.*

*Store pesticides in their original containers in a locked cabinet or shed away from food. Dispose of unused pesticides or empty containers safely, according to NH regulations. If you suspect pesticide poisoning, call the New Hampshire Poison Control Center at **1-800-562-8236**.*

UNH Entomologist Dr. Donald Chandler reviewed this information for technical accuracy, 7/01

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