



Facts About Bed Bugs

Agriculture Fact Sheet

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UNH Cooperative Extension Programs

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What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs have tormented people throughout human history. They are now increasingly becoming a problem within residences of all kinds, including homes, apartments, dormitories, cruise ships, hospitals, senior housing and shelters. So what are they and where do they come from? They are small parasitic blood sucking insects that often go unnoticed. People carry them into their homes unknowingly – in infested luggage, furniture, bedding, or clothing. So here are a few tips that can help you identify, prevent and manage these pesky insects.

Identification

Order: Hemiptera.

Family: Cimicidae.

Species: Common Bed Bug, *Cimex lectularius*.

Adults

- Small, brownish insects.
- Just under ¼” long.
- Relatively flat.
- Wingless or with vestigial wings.
- 4-segmented antennae.
- 3-segmented beak (mouth-part).
- Body covered with short, golden-colored hairs (setae) arranged in bands.
- Live just under a year.

Eggs

- Approximately 1mm long.
- Whitish in color and very sticky.
- Laid in batches of 5-15/day.
- Hatch at a rate of 6-17 days.

Immature (Nymphs)

- Resemble adults, but much smaller (less than 1/10” long) and lighter in color.
- Newly hatched nymphs are translucent and are no bigger than a pinhead. After feeding, they are light red.
- Molt after each meal; will molt 5 times before adulthood.



Adult bed bug. Credit: G. Alpert, Harvard University, Bugwood.org.



Hatched bed bug eggs. Credit: M. El Damir, Bugwood.org.



Bed bug nymph. Credit: G. Alpert, Harvard University, Bugwood.org.

Signs of Bed Bug Infestation

1. Bites. Bed bug bites can itch and look similar to mosquito or flea bites.
2. Small, dark spots on bed linens and around areas where people sleep or sit.
3. The bugs themselves.



Bed bugs signs in the creases of a mattress.

Inspecting for Bed bugs

Inspect the following areas:

- Seams and creases of mattresses and box-springs.
- Around bed frames and headboards.
- Under furniture (chairs, couches, beds, night-stands, chest of drawers, etc.).
- Between couch cushions.
- Behind baseboards, windows, and door casings.
- Behind electrical plates, under loose wallpaper, and behind pictures or other wall hangings.
- In, under, and around floor clutter.

Once in the home bed bugs are mostly found in rooms where people sleep or sit/lay for extended periods of time.

Bed Bug Prevention

While there is no way to completely prevent bed bug infestations, there are steps you can take to avoid an infestation, stop the spread of an infestation, or detect an infestation sooner:

- Remove floor clutter from rooms in your house (especially bedrooms).
- Inspect all furniture (especially used furniture) that is brought into your home.
- When traveling, inspect your hotel/motel room carefully for bed bugs.
- Use the metal luggage rack in your hotel room to store your luggage. If all of your luggage does not fit on the rack, place it in the bathtub or on the bathroom counter.
- After returning home from a trip, leave your luggage in the garage. Wash all items that were stored in the luggage with hot water and dry on high heat.
- If visiting a place where bed bug activity is suspected, clothing should be changed as soon as possible after leaving the site, and the potentially infested clothing should be placed in a plastic bag until it can be laundered in hot water and dried on high heat for at least 20 minutes.

Bed Bug Management

How Do I Get Rid of Bed Bugs?

A bed bug infestation is best handled by a professional pest control company. However, if you do attempt to treat bed bugs on your own, there is a number of things you can try:

Vacuum

- Vacuuming is an effective way to reduce large numbers of bed bugs quickly. Use vacuum that empties.
- Avoid attachments with brushes or bristles.
- Vacuum bags should be tied shut within a trash bag and discarded outside your home when finished.

Monitoring Devices

- "Climb-ups" and "interceptors" are devices that help in the early detection of bed bug infestations.
- Monitor for bed bugs on your mattress and box spring encasements.

Clean Bed Linens

- Bed is stripped, cleaned and all bedding washed and dried (dry on high for 20 minutes).

Heat and/or Cold Treatments

- Heat at 120°F for 2 hours.
- Freeze below 0°F for 4-7 days.
- Steam at 220°F, using dry steam.

Pesticide Treatments

- IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT ONLY LICENSED PEST MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS APPLY PESTICIDES.

Updated: November 2016 (Rachel Maccini)
Reformatted: November 2016 (Marie-Eve Jacques)

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