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MAY/JUNE 2008
Vol. 20 No. 3

The Pest Bulletin

New Ants are on the Move



Because of our increasingly global economy, with more people and merchandise moving about more rapidly than ever before, new pests are constantly invading this country. Often these invaders end up becoming some of our most serious pests—much more invasive and damaging than native pests.



This is nowhere more evident than in the ant world. Consider these ants that have arrived here from other parts of the world, mostly in the last century: **Argentine ants, pharaoh ants, red imported fire ants, pavement ants, white-footed ants,**

crazy ants, and ghost ants. All of these ants are gradually spreading and showing up where they've never been seen before.

An example of this is the white-footed ant, so named because the bottoms of its legs are whitish. This ant is established and slowly spreading in Florida, but was also recently discovered thriving as far away as San Francisco and Seattle.



What makes these imported ants so "successful" at invading new territories? Many of them have an incredible reproductive capacity because each colony has many queens. Colonies can end up

being very large, often with many cooperating nests, and some kinds can easily divide into two or more colonies, a process called "budding".

The cooperating nests of white-footed ants can total as many as several million ants, which means one colony can invade several homes simultaneously. Incredibly, half of this ant's colony is made up of reproductive, egg-laying females. You can be sure we'll be hearing much more about "**super ants**" like these in the years ahead!

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Thick ivy may look good growing up the side of a building, but it eventually damages the surface it attaches to, and it harbors pests like birds, wasps, mice and ants. Keep ivy trimmed down from walls, or even better yet, keep it trimmed so it is five feet away from the foundation.

Termite Danger Zones

Every home has "danger zones". These are places where termites are more likely to attack because of conditions that favor them. It is important to identify and correct these conditions. Here are three dangerous situations to be aware of.

⊙ **Excess moisture.** Moisture makes conditions more ideal for termites, thus encouraging attack. Watch for and repair any leaky pipes and dripping faucets. Check your rain gutters occasionally to make sure they are not clogged and causing water to spill over onto wood. Make sure your downspouts carry water away from the building, rather than dumping it at the foundation. Slope soil so that water drains away from your foundation.

⊙ **"Junk wood".** This feeds and sustains termites in the soil immediately around your home, making the eventual attack of your home more likely. Eliminate

tree stumps near your home. Dig out formboards and wood debris left over from construction. Keep firewood away from the foundation.

⊙ **Wood in direct contact with untreated soil.** Termites are especially likely to attack wood that is in direct contact with soil. Plus, their entry through it and into your home is hidden from view. For these reasons, wood (including fences) should not contact soil.

There are many hidden areas where termites can enter a home, including cracks in the foundation, openings around pipes and wires, and behind vinyl, brick, and stucco siding. Before termites and other wood destroying pests do major damage, be sure to ask us for a regular *inspection* to detect them EARLY, and identify these and other situations that need to be corrected.





Bed Bug Cousins



What looks and bites like a bed bug, but isn't? There are a number of closely related bugs almost identical to bed bugs. These include the *bat bug* which feeds primarily on bats, and the *swallow bug*, *chimney swift bug*, and *poultry bug*, all of which feed mostly on birds.

Fortunately, these bugs prefer bat and bird blood to human blood. Unfortunately, when they're hungry they're not picky feeders! When their main hosts migrate or mature and leave these parasites behind, the bugs start crawling about, and it's then that they start seeking human blood. They may crawl indoors searching for a blood meal if their bat or bird hosts had been nesting nearby in an attic, chimney, under the eaves or in a similar place. Bat bugs can become so abundant that bats will actually abandon their nests for a period, a practice known as "roost switching". Whatever the reason for the loss of the preferred hosts, these bed bug look-alikes can become nasty pests.



Your Questions Answered

Q. *I have many valuable papers and fabrics in my home. Which pests damage these?*

A. Valuable **papers** and paper collectibles such as photographs, postcards, baseball cards, stamps, old magazines and wallpaper are most often damaged by *silverfish*, *cockroaches*, *crickets*, and *termites*. All of these pests eat paper or substances in paper, and some eat glue as well. *Mice* can damage paper products when they shred them to make nesting material. Damage to papers can also be caused by any pest which leaves excretions or droppings, especially *flies* and *spiders*.

Fabrics, including valuable formal clothing, vintage clothing and doll clothes, are eaten by several pests, but especially *clothes moths* and *carpet beetles*. These pests love items made of animal origin, such as woolens and furs, but they will even eat synthetic fabrics if they are stained with food, urine, or sweat. *Silverfish* and *crickets* eat and damage cotton fabric that has been starched.

Proper storage of valuables, plus a professional, on-going pest management program, is the best insurance against damage to these and other items around the home and office.

Rodents Love Weedy Areas

When we say that mice and rats often invade from outside, where exactly do these rodents come from? Often, it is from weedy areas. Our main pest species of mice and rats originated from the grassy steppes of Asia—basically very similar habitats to weedy areas. Weeds provide rodents with everything they need, including food (from the tiny, nutritious weed seeds and other foods there), moisture, weedy cover (for protection), and nesting materials. Even small areas of weeds benefit rodents—an important reason to eliminate or mow weeds and grassy areas



Pests in the News!

☛ **Ants that devour entire cars?** Yes, it's true, in a sense! Texas leaf-cutting ants in parts of Texas and Louisiana excavate huge underground galleries where they bring in leaves and 'farm' a fungus they eat that grows on the leaves. In two separate recent incidents in Louisiana, these ants removed so much soil they actually caused sinkholes that swallowed entire vehicles.



☛ **Abandoned, foreclosed homes may become a serious source of mosquitoes** if the homes have untended swimming pools, spas, or ornamental ponds. While mosquitoes commonly breed in backed-up roof gutters and other small bodies of water, consider that an unchlorinated, average size swimming pool can easily contain as many as *one million* mosquito larvae. Besides the nuisance factor of biting mosquitoes, these pests are more of a concern than ever because of the increased risk from WEST NILE VIRUS.

☛ **Are house flies responsible for infecting chickens with Salmonella?** Recent tests by USDA scientists show that Salmonella-free chickens become infected when they are around Salmonella-infected flies. Interestingly, in the test, it was those chickens that ate the flies that became infected. Much more research needs to be done to determine how Salmonella food poisoning gets into our various foods, but it appears flies may be an important part of the problem.

Squirrels Too Hot for Rattlesnakes

Researchers have discovered that *California ground squirrels* put rattlesnakes on the defensive by heating up their tails and waving them vigorously at the snakes. The snakes can sense infrared radiation from heat, and the heated tails apparently tell them they have been discovered, and to stay away. Adult California ground squirrels are immune to the snake venom and can fight back at the snake, injuring it.



These squirrels only heat up their tails when encountering rattlesnakes. When confronted by gopher snakes, which can't sense the heat, they don't bother to heat them.

