JRG
TERMITE & PEST CONTROL
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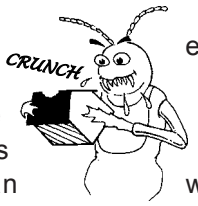
The Pest Bulletin

Uninvited Guests May Be Eating Your Home

Our busy life styles have unfortunately reduced the number of guests we invite into our homes for a meal. However, termites are both uninvited and unwanted, yet they enter and set up residency and feast on the wood that holds an entire home together. Don't let this happen!

Regular inspections can help protect your investment. For most of us, our home is our largest and most important investment—so we reap big dividends when we protect it. The wood in a home can last for centuries, but wood-destroying pests can ruin all that.

Termites, wood-boring beetles, carpenter ants, and wood decay all attack wooden structures. Besides looking for signs of these pests, we also look for the many conditions that increase the likelihood of an attack. For subterranean termites, conducive conditions includes poor drainage, wood that touches the soil, cracked foundations, tree stumps and roots too close to a foundation, dirt filled steps, soil above siding, water leaks, and many other seemingly harmless situations that can end up causing big problems.



If termites or other wood-eating pests are present, don't panic. Fortunately the termites from the Saturday cartoons don't exist. Most termites eat wood at a relatively slow rate, so you have time to call us and get the job done right by professionals. Proper evaluation of the problem and professional treatment techniques are critical in stopping these expensive "house guests" from feasting both in and on your home.

Are Mosquitoes Breeding in Your Yard?

Because of the spread of West Nile Virus, there is renewed interest in reducing mosquito bites and mosquito breeding areas around our homes. Now is a good time to take a walk around your yard and see if there is water where mosquitoes might breed. Here are some common breeding places to eliminate.

✓ **Roof gutters:** A very common breeding place. Clean as often as needed to remove debris that creates standing water. Repair sags in the gutters.

✓ **Birdbaths:** Drain and change the water at least once a week.

✓ **Tree holes:** Fill them with sand or mortar. (Even small amounts of water, if it lasts a week or more, can breed mosquitoes.)

✓ **Swimming pools:** Drain water from pool covers, and maintain water quality at all times.

✓ **Ponds:** Stock ponds with fish, or use Bti, a bacteria deadly to mosquito larvae.

✓ **Low areas:** Fill or drain areas where water sits for a week or more.

✓ **Containers of any kind:** Drain flower pot saucers, get rid of old tires or drill drainage holes in them, replace water in pet saucers at least once a week, turn over wheelbarrows, and look for other places that hold water.

Doing these things will not eliminate mosquitoes, because they can migrate several miles from where they develop. But it will reduce the numbers of mosquitoes around your home, and you'll know you are doing your part in reducing mosquito problems. Hand this newsletter to your neighbors, and encourage them to join your efforts!

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Adult carpet beetles (about 1/8 inch long and round-to-oval in shape) feed on flower pollen, and are especially common on white and cream-colored flowers. Keep the beetles out by rinsing and shaking cut flowers before you bring them indoors. Also, repair any holes in screens.

"Good morning—you're just in time!"

Thank you for your business and referrals!

Vampire Bats Can Run, Too

Bats are expert fliers, but most can't really walk because their front legs are designed for flight. However, there is an exception—the vampire bat. Contrary to legend, these bats are found only from Mexico to South America. They are the lone bats that suck blood, and they are known to suck blood from sleeping cattle.

Vampire bats often sneak up on their prey on all fours. People have witnessed vampire bats do a kind of hop, attaining an amazing speed of six feet per second almost instantly, and then come to a dead stop.

Recently, scientists showed that vampire bats can actually run when they need to. By placing the bats on a variable-speed treadmill that prevented them from launching into flight, and photographing them at slow-motion, it was shown that they can break into a high speed "bounding gait". This is technically classified as running, and aren't you glad we don't have any of these blood-sucking bats around here?

New Roach Mating Scent Discovered

We now know the recipe for the "secret perfume" female German cockroaches use to lure males. According to a recent issue of the journal *Science*, the exact compound has been identified, and it can now be made synthetically. The scent could be used to attract males to traps or baits, improving control methods.

The common German cockroach is a worldwide tenacious pest, but because the female produces extremely small quantities of the sex attractant, scientists until recently weren't even able to find the gland that produces and stores the compound.

While this is a major breakthrough, don't look for eradication of these cockroaches in the near future. In any given roach population, about 80% are sexually immature nymphs, so the percentage of a population that would be attracted to the scent is small. It remains to be seen if the sex attractant can be used to control enough males to slowly manage the pests.

Your Questions Answered

Q. Why do mosquito bites itch?

A. When a mosquito punctures your skin in search of a blood meal, she (only female mosquitoes bite—they need blood before they can produce a batch of eggs) injects a special saliva. The saliva contains several substances, including an anticoagulant that prevents your blood from clotting while she sucks it up through a thin tube.

The first time we are bitten, nothing happens. But gradually our body becomes sensitized to the foreign proteins in the saliva and a small itchy red bump appears about 24 hours later. After many more bites, a pale, swollen hive or wheal appears minutes after a bite, in addition to the red bump 24 hours later. With repeated bites, some people stop reacting, and others become increasingly allergic and develop even larger bumps.

The bumps and itching are the result of our own immune system recognizing the saliva as a foreign substance, and releasing histamine at the wound. It's actually our own histamine that makes us itch, not the mosquito's saliva.

Hot & Bothered Spiders Head Indoors . . . to Bite!

Highly poisonous redback spiders, distant cousins of black widows, are moving into homes in record numbers in Australia. According to people in the area, a combination of rains, strong winds, and warm temperatures is making the spiders downright “cantankerous” and driving the spiders indoors. Bites have been recorded at a rate of one per day, far higher than normal.

These spiders have a deadly bite, but the number of deaths has been low since the introduction of an anti-venom.

Did You Know?

- **Fire ants** can be serious problems in nursing homes and hospitals, especially considering that many patients are immobile or mentally impaired and may not be able to fend off an attack. Fire ants in these situations have been responsible for a number of deaths, and administrators of hospitals and care facilities in areas with fire ants are becoming increasingly aware of the problem.
- **Ticks** are experts at finding their prey, but do some activities make us more vulnerable to their attacks than others? According to a study by researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, sitting on a log was the riskiest behavior—just sitting for five minutes in a California tick-infested hardwood forest resulted in a 30% chance of getting ticks. Ticks found the researchers 23% of the time when they gathered wood, and 17% of the time when they sat against a tree.