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The Pest Bulletin

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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.

Prevent Flea Problems!



We're seeing an increase in flea problems in the last couple of years. This same trend is occurring nationally, but why it is happening is not yet clear. Some experts claim there is early resistance developing to the very effective on-animal flea products, but the evidence for this is inconclusive. Additionally, there may be an increase in wild animals like raccoons and skunks which constantly reintroduce fleas into yards.

We still don't know if these reasons are causing the increase, but we do know the on-animal products have been so effective that many pet owners have stopped following good flea prevention practices. Here is a summary of strategies that all cat and dog owners should practice to help reduce flea problems.

Always apply an on-animal product according to the label directions, and at

the regular intervals the label states. It doesn't work if you apply half the product, or use it less often than recommended.

- ⊙ Whenever possible, exclude or control wild animals coming into your yard.
- ⊙ Vacuum all floors and upholstered furniture weekly, especially those areas where cats or dogs sleep or lounge. If the infestation is severe, immediately place the vacuum filter bags in a sealed plastic bag and discard. If possible wash pet bedding weekly.

In those cases where these preventative measures don't work, call us to treat your yard and home for fleas. This is needed to immediately control a flea buildup and prevent biting, and to help keep the flea population down.

Remember, there is no reason you, your guests, or pets need to suffer from blood-sucking fleas!



Wow! Something smells good for dinner!

Thank you for your business and referrals!



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.

