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The Pest Bulletin

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A Prescription for a Healthy Home

Pest management professionals are increasingly being recognized as **"Protectors of Health and Property"**. Regular pest control not only means **fewer encounters** with nuisance pests, **less pest-caused filth** in our homes, and **less damage** to our homes and possessions—it also means a **healthier place to live**.

It is now well established that pests can contribute to allergy problems. The National Institutes of Health estimates that up to 15 million people have allergic reactions to pests. Roaches are



a main culprit, but fleas, rodents, and a variety of other pests are also problematic.

Pests can also affect our health by their biting and stinging, and by carrying and spreading diseases. Various bees, wasps, ticks, mosquitoes, ants, fleas, and spiders bite or sting us, injecting their venom or saliva, or robbing us of our blood. In doing this they transmit everything from West Nile Virus to Lyme disease. Also, many pests spread diseases such as com-

mon food poisoning by simply crawling on our food or kitchen counters.

By controlling these pests, we make your life easier and more enjoyable, and help guard your health. We also eliminate the need for you to handle and store most pesticides, adding to the safety of your home, which is especially important when severe weather or other natural disasters strike.

So **"thank you!"** for encouraging us as we take a vital role in protecting your home and our community.

Bed Bugs Are in the News



Who would have guessed that bed bugs would be back in the news! Whether in fancy hotels, health care

facilities, dormitories, apartments, and homes, bed bug problems have been steadily increasing in recent years.

Most people have fortunately never seen a bed bug, and have heard about them only from that old bedtime nursery rhyme, *"...don't let the bed bugs bite!"* Up until the mid-1940's, bed bugs were a common and widespread pest in this country. At that time DDT and other broad-spectrum, very long-lived pesticides came into use. These were used so widely against all kinds of pests, and were so effective against bed bugs, that bed bug problems thankfully became a thing of the past—at least

everyone thought.

The recent resurgence in bed bugs is caused by many factors. Increased international travel is resulting in more travelers often unknowingly bringing the pests here. Immigration is at an all-time high. And DDT and other long-lived insecticides that used to be widely sprayed have since been discontinued.

It's anyone's guess how common bed bugs will eventually become in this country. These pests feed at night, leaving dark blood spots on bed sheeting. Unlike flea bites, which often are found around the ankles, bed bugs feed on any skin that is exposed while sleeping. Bed bug control requires a very thorough inspection and treatment, and a high level of cooperation with owners and occupants.

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Weather-stripping does more than just keep out cold air—it can also reduce the number of pests coming in. Apply new (or replace old and brittle) weather-stripping around all exterior doors, including garage doors, as well as to any gaps around windows and other openings.



Insect Found to Damage Pipes



According to a recent report in *The Canadian Entomologist*, Western Conifer Seed Bugs aren't just a nuisance when they invade homes and other buildings in the fall and winter—they can actually puncture holes in certain kinds of plumbing pipes. This common invader has now spread across much of the United States and into Canada.

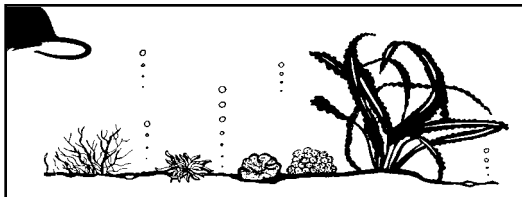
Laboratory tests confirmed what some people had suspected—that the bugs can use their unusually strong and sharp mouthparts to pierce plastic pipes, resulting in microscopic holes. PEX (cross-linked polyethylene) pipe, a component of some home plumbing and radiant heating systems, is most susceptible, but even PVC and CPVC pipes can be damaged, according to the tests.

Fugitive Rat Sets Swim Record

Scientists released a radio-tagged rat on an island off New Zealand, in an attempt to learn more about the movement of rats when they invade islands. But at the end of the project the rodent was too sly to be trapped. It finally turned up—but, incredibly, on another island 440 yards away!

The evasive rat had swum an amazing distance across the open ocean, setting a new record. This is now the longest distance recorded for a rat swimming across open sea. The rat was eventually killed in a trap baited with penguin meat.

Invasive species, especially rats, are a major cause of extinctions, second only to habitat loss. Rats prey on a wide variety of defenseless animals, especially birds, their chicks, and eggs. They also compete with native species for essential food.



Your Questions Answered

Q. Could I have rats or mice and not be aware of it? What are the signs to look for?

A. We usually receive calls from people after they've actually seen a mouse or rat, or seen some sign of feeding, or their droppings. By that time the pests may already have lived in your home for awhile and multiplied, or caused other damage that becomes apparent only later.

You should be aware of the many other signs of a rodent

infestation, including high excitement of cats and dogs probing a certain area of a floor or wall, squeaks and climbing sounds, nests or caches of food, tracks, burrows, and gnawed materials. Eventually rodents will also leave urine smells, signs of trails or runs, and smudge marks along pipes, wires, and beams where dirt and oil from their fur leaves a dark mark.



Can Mice Really Sing?



According to new findings by researchers at *Washington University School of Medicine*, mice can sing! Male mice produce high-frequency sounds when they smell the scent of a female mouse. Human ears can't hear these sounds, but the researchers recorded the mice and then used a computer program to drop the recordings several octaves and make them audible to our ears.

The sounds have a definite pattern to them—repeated variations of chirps or phrases—which qualifies them as songs, in the same way as whistling birds and even whales sing. However, the researchers note that the mouse songs are much simpler, lacking the sophistication of adult bird songs.

Pest Trivia

TEST YOURSELF AND FRIENDS WITH THESE!

1. Ants outnumber people. Can you guess by how much?
2. Can a mouse kill an elephant?
3. How many ears do those noisy crickets have—and where are those ears located on their bodies?
4. What is the coldest temperature an insect can survive?



ANSWERS TO PEST TRIVIA!

1. By some estimates, there are over one million ants for every man, woman, and child in the world.
2. Yes, if it runs up an elephant's trunk and blocks it, it can kill the elephant. (This really happened.)
3. Crickets have two organs that act as ears—one on each front leg.
4. Tougher than Superman, at least one insect can survive being submersed in *liquid helium*—that's minus 270° Centigrade! It's the larvae of an African chironomid fly. Submerge it for up to five minutes in liquid helium, and there's still a 100% survival rate!