

PestGazette

School Days May Bring Head Lice

Your child has head lice — it's every parent's worst nightmare. There is conflicting information about the best way to get rid of this pest, but your best source of information is your family doctor. Head lice spread easily, and one child can bring home enough to infest the whole family. It can take a while to notice that the lice are being spread, and 15 to 20 percent of the school may be infested before they are detected and identified. Lice are spread by sharing hats, scarves, and combs and by direct head-to-head contact, which happens often during play.

Although the treatment of head lice requires the infected individual to seek medical attention, we can help you identify and provide you or school authorities with information about lice and other autumn pests. We can also help control many of them; even unexpected ones like bed bugs. If you have problems with unwelcome visitors from school or from the outdoors, contact us. We are ready to help you identify, survey for, and control them effectively. Don't hesitate to call us for information or assistance.

Beware of Yellowjackets

Throughout late summer and early fall as the weather gets cooler, many species of yellowjacket queens stop laying eggs. New queens emerge, mate and find protected sites to hibernate over winter. Worker yellowjackets stop foraging for the colony and go out more often on their own. They are attracted to sweets or syrups, such as those left in the bottoms of soda cans. These and other sweet things in and

around garbage cans or bags can draw dozens or even hundreds of such pest wasps. Since they no longer have a colony to provide for, these yellowjacket workers tend to "hang around" garbage cans, soft drinks or any other source of sweets they may find.

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Pests That Come in from the Cold

It's a warm day in late fall and you suddenly notice several greenish-colored flies in your south-facing window. There are several *dozen* ladybird beetles flying around inside your west-facing window. On a bright, sunny day in December you hear the loud buzzing of a big brown-and-orange insect flying slowly across the room to a window. What are these and what can you do about them? These are most likely one of the "overwintering" pests described below.



Ladybug

Cluster Flies

The 20 or more dull, grayish, fuzzy-looking flies buzzing around your window are probably cluster flies. Every autumn they become pests of homes, schools and commercial buildings throughout much of the U.S. They look like typical house flies but are a bit larger, dull, and usually fly slowly.

As fall approaches, the last generations of adults emerge from the soil and look for a warm place to hibernate. These hardy insects can travel more than a mile for a suitable overwintering site and may choose your attic, wall voids or windowsills. They are very troublesome because of their sheer numbers. They become active again during any warm spells in winter and again in early spring, and try to find openings to go back outside.

For immediate relief, the best thing to do is vacuum them up, remove the vacuum bag, seal it in a larger plastic bag, and put that bag in your trash can. Then call us. We can provide a service that will discourage cluster flies from collecting in your home or attic.



Cluster fly



Boxelder bug

Ladybugs

About the time of the first frost, ladybugs (Ladybird Beetles) may come into your home through a crack, crevice or open window. Once inside, they remain inactive until spring and do not cause big problems except for their presence, sometimes in great numbers. When it gets warm they become active again and try to find their way back outside, where they continue their very helpful work of eating other insects, especially several kinds of major plant pests.

Some kinds of Ladybugs, like the common Asian Ladybug, can come into a house literally by the thousands. You can open your window to let them out or you can collect them by vacuuming them and discarding the vacuum bag immediately. If you do vacuum them, be careful as they can leave a bright orange stain on carpets or walls when disturbed.

Boxelder Bug

Several plant-feeding insects sometimes come into houses in large numbers. These include the Boxelder Bug, the Western Conifer Seed Bug and several different "stink bugs." Infestations of these bugs are a direct result of their building up a large population on their host plants near the home they came into. Some of them will fly to outside lights at night, then come in unnoticed when a door or window is opened the next morning. Most of these are large enough to be noticed soon after they come inside.

Give us a call if you see any pests inside this time of year. Remember, keeping them out is better than trying to eliminate them when they do get inside. ■

Field Rodents Move In

This is the time of year when many creatures normally found outdoors come in to spend the winter. They like the warmth and often help themselves to food stored in our pantry, such as boxes or bags of cornmeal, nuts, cereals or dry pet food. These furry little creatures can be more than just a nuisance. Several wild rodents that come into homes in the autumn or winter spread strains of Hantavirus that can sometimes result in death for humans. The largest carrier of this virus is the harmless-looking Deer Mouse, *Peromyscus maniculatus*, which has a prevalent distribution and population throughout the United States. Wild and domestic rodents have been reported to harbor and spread as many as 200 human diseases.

Rodents eat and contaminate our food as well as chew and mess up our homes. They may interrupt our Internet access and even start fires by chewing electric wires. Rodents gnawing matches or wiring probably cause more than 1/5 of the “fires of unknown origin” in the U.S. ■

You can help **prevent** rodents.

- 1** Cleaning up thoroughly and often any spilled food, garbage, pet food or grain which might attract rodents. Don't forget those fall decorations hung on doors or walls, and don't leave food or water out in a pet's dish overnight.
- 2** Keep all garbage in tightly-closed bags
- 3** Clean up and remove all trash and rubbish, especially near your buildings.
- 4** Be sure all outside doors, windows and vents fit snugly, with no gaps, and are kept closed, especially at night. A mouse needs only a 3/8-inch crack or hole to get inside.
- 5** Seal up any hole or crack on the outside of any building that is big enough for a rodent to enter. Pay special attention to places where wires, pipes or other utility lines enter a building.
- 6** Keep plants and shrubs trimmed back at least 12 inches from the outer surface of any building. These can provide rodents food, shelter and an easy way up to higher entry points. Rodents climb very well.
- 7** In urban settings, trim back or remove any extensive plantings of low-growing shrubs, especially *Taxus* or Junipers. Norway rats have a strong tendency to establish extensive outdoor burrows under these two types of shrubs.

Yellowjackets (continued from page 1)

The first step in preventing this problem is to clean up all spilled sweet materials thoroughly, placing all empty cans and bottles in tightly-closed heavy plastic bags. Wash and rinse all surfaces as well as dishes and serving utensils frequently. Keep all sweet foods, drinks and fruits covered until they are about to be eaten.

Yellowjackets can be dangerous pests. According to the media, over 500,000 people go to the emergency room every year due to

stinging insects. Control of yellowjackets should not be attempted by homeowners. These pests can sting repeatedly as they have an aggressive disposition this time of year. Call us if you see any yellowjackets where you live or work. We can survey the situation, provide immediate knockdown treatments if needed, and advise on sanitation improvements which might help reduce these pests. ■



Call us today. We can help you detect, survey for and eliminate rodents from your home.

Fruit Flies

Small fruit flies, or vinegar flies, mainly members of the genus *Drosophila*, are attracted to ripe or decaying fruit. They lay their eggs in these materials and the larvae develop there. Adult flies are approximately 1/8 inch long, including their folded wings. Most species are dull tan to brown in color. They have red eyes and short, feathery antennae. One female may lay 300 to 500 eggs in her lifetime.

Long-term control strategies include sanitation and eliminating all suitable larval food source(s).

Call us if you need help controlling these or other pests in your home. ■



Fabric Pests

You may get out your fall or winter clothes and find there are holes or “thin” spots where the fur or wool liner of a coat looks “worn.” If you look closely, and see little “worms” or tiny oval beetles crawling near those holes or spots, then you have a fabric pest. There are several common, widespread insects that eat natural fibers.

Clothes Moths

Clothes Moths are small buff-to-gray colored moths with a wing span of 1/2 inch or less. The two worldwide pest species of these, the Webbing Clothes Moth and the Case-Making Clothes Moth, both lay their eggs on or near natural fabric materials. The larvae feed on fabric, causing all their damage in the form of clipped hair, thin spots and holes. The Webbing Clothes Moth larvae make silk tubes in hidden places, such as under a collar, near where they are feeding. Case-Making Clothes Moth larvae carry their small cigar-shaped silk case with them as they crawl around and feed on the fabric.

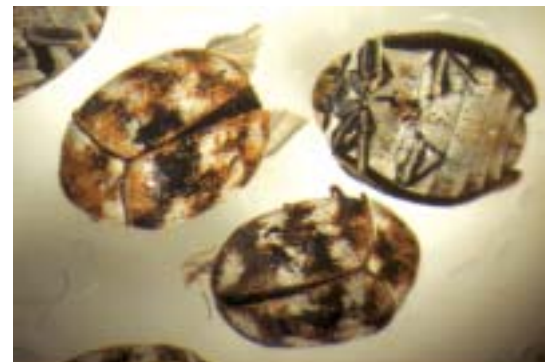
Varied Carpet Beetles

These small, hard-bodied, oval beetles about 1/16 to 1/8 inch long and are found worldwide. Adults are strong fliers and mainly feed on a wide variety of outdoor flowers, pollen or plants. They may come into houses or businesses and deposit their eggs on nearly any natural animal or plant materials on which the larvae then feed. Often they select fabrics such as wool, cotton or as their name indicates, carpets which contain natural organic fibers. They may be found in bird or animal nests, hair, or lint; and even in the nests of social bees and wasps.

The key to controlling most fabric pests is to find the main site of infestation and eliminate it. Besides the obvious clothing, furs, carpeting and stored products, it may be necessary to check for more unusual places such as those mentioned above. Working with our technician, you can provide us important information as to where these items were stored and where you see damage so that we can thoroughly inspect and take corrective action that will provide you with peace of mind. ■



Clothes moth



Varied carpet beetle