

Bedbugs

By Ed Lentz – OSU Extension, Hancock County

If you are like many of us, you recently have moved a child out of a college dormitory or apartment; will soon partake in a summer vacation; or have a child participate in a youth summer camp. All of these activities have the potential to inadvertently bring bedbugs to your home.

Bedbugs have continued to be a problem in Hancock and surrounding counties since I wrote my first article several years ago. I cannot stress enough that you do not want to introduce them to your home.

Inspect items that are being brought into your home from children that are returning from camp and or have been living in multiple housing units (apartments and dormitories). When staying at a motel, check the bed, mattress, springs, and wall hangings for signs of bedbugs.

Often adults are not seen in motel rooms infested with bedbugs. Look for rusty to dark spots of excrement on sheets and mattresses, bedding, and walls. Fecal spots, eggshells, and shed skins may also be found in the vicinity of their hiding places.

If anything suspicious is found, request another room. Also, do not leave clothing, open suitcases or other containers on beds not in use even if a room appears to be clean.

Store luggage on the stands provided in many motels. Do not store clothing in the dressers. Keep bags zipped when not in use.

Upon return, check bags and containers for bedbugs before moving them to the bedroom. Clothing should be removed from luggage and washed in hot water (hot water kills bedbugs). Similar precautions should be taken when family members move back home after being in an apartment or dormitory or return from summer camp.

Other beetles that fly may end up in a person's bedroom when they inadvertently enter a home. So a bug found in the bedroom does not mean they are bedbugs.

For one thing bedbugs do not have wings. Bedbug adults are brown to reddish-brown, oval-shaped, flattened, and about 3/16 to 1/5 inch long.

Their shape resembles the undeveloped seeds found occasionally in seedless watermelons. The body becomes more elongated, swollen, and dark red after a blood meal.

Juveniles are nymphs that may be much smaller and almost clear until feeding. Female bed bugs may deposit from one to twelve eggs per day.

Bed bugs are fast moving insects that are nocturnal. They feed mostly at night when their host is asleep.

The bite is painless. A small, hard, swollen, white welt may develop at the site of each bite.

Rows of three or so welts on exposed skin are characteristic signs of bed bugs. Welts do not have a red spot in the center such as is characteristic of flea bites.

Rusty- red spots or streaks on bed sheets is another indicator that bedbugs may be feeding. In many cases the excrement of bedbugs is found in a bedroom before the actual sighting of the insect.

If you suspect that your home has been infested with bedbugs, look for the signs and try to confirm identification of an adult. Insects may be brought to OSU Extension office to confirm identification, but make sure they are in a sealed container.

Bedbugs are difficult to eliminate once established in a dwelling. Over the counter baits, insect fogs, insect bombs, and do-it-yourself remedies do not work.

Eradication will most likely require a professional exterminator, extensive cleaning and sanitation, and perseverance and patience.

Bedbugs do not reflect ones status in life. Generally everyone will have to deal with an insect parasite or pest sometime in their life whether it is mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, lice, chiggers, or cockroaches.

Disease may be associated with some of the insects listed above; fortunately, bedbugs are generally not a carrier of a more serious disease. However, some individuals may be more allergic and react to their bites.

Good sanitation in the home is the best defense for all types of insect concerns. However, precaution is the best defense against bedbugs and careful travelers should take steps to prevent their unwelcome visit.

Additional information may be found in the OSU Fact Sheet on Bedbugs located at the following URL: <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/2000/2105.html>.