

BED BUG FACT SHEET

Description: Adult bed bugs are oval, flat, brown, and wingless insects approximately 1/4 to 3/8 inch, similar in appearance to a wood tick. After taking a blood meal, its color will change from brown to purplish-red and will be larger with a more cigar-shaped appearance. Newly hatched nymphs are translucent and lighter in color and continue to become browner and molt as they reach maturity.



Biology: As the female bed bug lays her eggs (one to five per day and 200-500 within her lifetime), she uses a clear substance to attach them in cracks and on rough surfaces. Under ideal conditions, eggs hatch in approximately seven days and the nymphs molt five times, taking a blood meal between each molt. Development time from egg to adult is 21 days.

Habits: Bed bugs hide in cracks and crevices during the day. A crack wide enough to fit the edge of a credit card can harbor them. Bed bugs are generally active only at night, with a peak attack period about an hour before dawn. Given the opportunity, they may attempt to feed at other times of the day. Blood is a bed bug's only food source. Attracted by warmth and the presence of carbon dioxide, the bug pierces the skin of its host. With one tube it injects its saliva, which contains anticoagulants and anesthetics, while with the other it withdraws blood of its host. After feeding for about five minutes, the bug returns to its hiding place. The bites cannot usually be felt until some minutes or hours later. Typically bed bugs seek blood every five to ten days although immature bed bugs may live for several months without feeding while adults may survive as long as one year without a meal.



Under normal circumstances, adult bed bugs will live for about ten to eleven months. Over time harborage areas become filled with the bugs molted skins, feces, and old eggshells. These areas have a characteristic "stink bug" smell caused by a secretion emitted by the bed bug. Bed bugs are attracted by exhaled carbon dioxide and they feed only on blood. Bed bugs also feed on bats and birds. When bats (late fall) and birds (mid to late summer) leave their nesting area the bed bugs are left without a food source and can migrate from the attic and roof overhangs into the house.



Control: The odor and little spots of excreted blood they produce, assist in pinpointing harborage areas. Bed bugs can be controlled with thorough applications of residual insecticides (such as Bedlam Plus, Cyzmic CS, Temprid, D-Fense SC or Phantom) applied to cracks and crevices, behind baseboards, around window and door casings, and into other known or suspected harborage areas. Furniture, especially mattresses (around seams, folds, buttons and tears) and underneath box spring coils should be lightly sprayed and covered with clean linens before use. Fogging or use of a total release fogger in a room with the furniture parts positioned for maximum exposure to the fog will enhance a quick knock down of exposed bed bugs. The use of foggers and residual insecticides together work well. Situations where there is a high population of bed bugs or harborage areas that are hard to treat may require additional treatments. Bed bug insecticides work slowly and may take one to seven days for control.

The use of pest strips may be used to control crawling bed bug nymphs and adults that have infested various items such as, but not limited to: electronics, appliances, footwear, art work and wall hangings, collectibles, toys, lamps, furniture, and other such items. Place infested items in a suitable plastic bag, poly sheeting, container or room that is closed to contain the strip treatment. Plastic bags or poly sheeting should be at least 2 mils thick. The closed volume for treatment should not exceed the volume to be treated for the size of the strip used. Avoid direct contact of the strip with the surface of items being treated. Seal items in the containment for a minimum of 48 hours to kill bed bug nymphs and adults. If bed bug eggs are suspected, seal items in the treated space for seven days. Seal containment with as much air space around the treated item(s) as practical to enhance the exposure to the product vapors. When treatment is complete, remove treated item(s) in a well-ventilated area and air out for at least two hours.

Commercial establishments that may require a program to treat bed bugs for six months should call the Pest Control Division at Warne Chemical.

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