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Pest Patrol News

Avoid Yellowjacket and Wasp Stings!



Ouch!! Stings from yellowjackets, wasps, hornets and bees really hurt! Plus, they're dangerous. A healthy adult may be able to sustain about 1,500 stings before being killed, but a child, with his or her smaller body, can be killed by far fewer stings. Even one sting can be dangerous for anyone allergic to the venom, and a physician should be contacted immediately.

You can greatly reduce the chance of being stung by these insects by following a few simple precautions.

* **Don't walk barefoot on grass**, especially if the grass contains clover, dandelions, or other blooming weeds that bees may be visiting.

* **Look before you sip** when you are outdoors. These insects are attracted to sweet drinks, so it is not uncommon for a person to get stung on the lip or in the mouth. Serving drinks with straws helps prevent this.

* **Should I avoid wearing perfume out-doors?** It was once thought that this was important, but there is really no evidence that strong fragrances, even of floral scents, make you any more likely to be stung.

* **Don't disturb a nest!** The most serious attacks occur when these insects perceive a threat and defend their nest in mass. For nests in the ground, even walking near them causes the ground to vibrate, setting off defensive alarms in the colony.

Our regular pest service helps eliminate dangerous stinging insects while their nests are still small, before they become unsafe for people and pets. If you have neighbors, friends, or relatives whose yards aren't protected by our expert services, please tell them we are here to help!

Common Indoor Fly Problems

We are often asked about indoor flies and where they are breeding. The answer depends on the kind of fly, because different types of flies come indoors, and each have very different breeding places. Here are some of the more common indoor flies we see in homes and businesses.

The *common house fly* is the most universal. It breeds in nearly anything moist and decaying, from food products to garbage to pet and other animal droppings. *Flesh flies* are larger and slower than these, and breed in dead snails and animal carcasses. *Cluster fly* maggots develop in earthworms. *Drain flies* breed in the moist gunk on the inside of drains. *Fungus gnats* often breed in damp house plant soil. *Fruit flies* lay their eggs in any break in the skin of very ripe fruit, but also on



wet, gungy mops, garbage cans, and similar places.

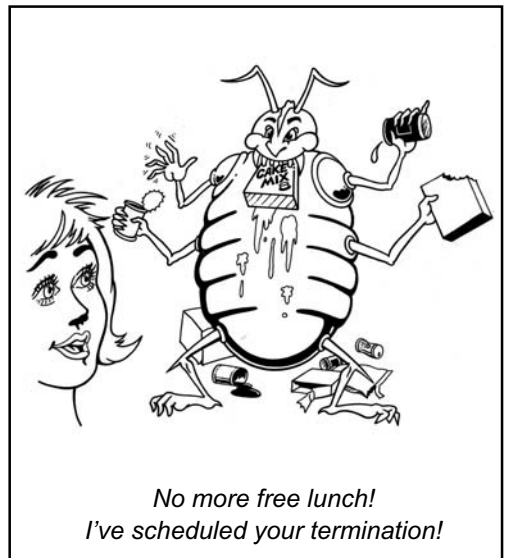
The disease-carrying capacity of flies is legendary. One study found that a single fly was carrying approximately *one million bacteria!* These germs can easily be transferred to food when flies land or walk across food-

preparing countertops or directly on the food itself.

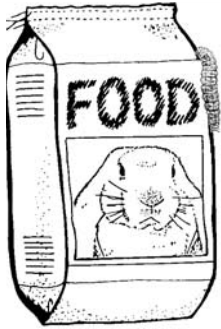
Persistent household fly problems are best solved with a multi-pronged attack. It is important to exclude flies with screens, remove places where they are breeding, and remove odors that are attracting them. It is also important to identify the flies so we know where they might be breeding and how to stop them. Our professionally applied treatments are part of an overall fly control strategy.

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Check your window screens and repair or replace them as needed. For screens pulled out from the edges, replace the old spline along the edges. If doors tend to be left open, install screen doors that shut automatically.



Pests Love Pet Stores



Pet food is very attractive to pets. Scientists surveyed eight retail pet stores in Kansas for insect pests during a seven month period, and collected an amazing **30 species and over 41,000 insects**. The insects were most often concentrated near bulk

food bins, in stockrooms, or on the shelves that held wild bird seed and food for small animals.

When anyone brings pet food home, it should be considered a potential source of pests. These pests then spread and contaminate human and other pet food packages that are open or are easy to chew into the package.

Always inspect pet food before you bring it home. Besides looking for actual beetles, moths, and small caterpillars, check for signs of pests, such as holes in bags or boxes where insects may be emerging, tears or gaps where moths and beetles could get into the packages, and webbing produced by stored food caterpillars.

Birds Sing Differently in Cities

When songbirds move to cities, they change their tune, research shows.

At least that is true for the *great tit*, a small bird with a yellow breast and belly. Research on the great tit in 10 European cities, including London and Paris, showed that in every case, their singing was different than the great tit singing in nearby forests.

The city bird songs were faster, shorter, and at a higher pitch. The researchers believe city birds change their singing to drown out the background noise created by cars and other city noises. City noises apparently disrupt the exchange of vital information contained in their normal country songs, such as when the males sing to attract females.



Your Questions Answered



Q What is an 'alien species'?

A An alien species has nothing to do with something from outer space. Sometimes also called 'exotic species', these are living organisms that invade a new geographical area and thrive in it. They can also wreak havoc with the native species in the area. Most of our

common household pests are alien.

An alien species is not always something ugly and vile—if you ask any Australian ecologist, they would tell you that one of their biggest problems have been cute, fluffy rabbits. Rabbits were brought to Australia from England in 1859. But without natural predators, rabbits thrived in Australia. They have become a major threat to the ecosystem by consuming native plants to the point of near extinction.

Invasive alien species are considered one of the main threats to biodiversity on Earth. As transportation around the world has accelerated, more pests have "hitchhiked" with us, spreading around the globe.

The worst alien species, on a global scale, are various kinds of *rats*. Rats have single-handedly caused the extinction of more native birds and other animals than any other alien species. *Red fire ants* and many other insects, plus *brown tree snakes*, *zebra mussels*, *water hyacinths*, and *Nile perch*, are among many other alien species that have been especially damaging to native ecosystems globally.

Scorpions on Two Planes



The *Snakes on a Plane* movie is a horror film, but recently scorpions were found on two planes—in real life!

A scorpion was found crawling on a passenger's clothing in May. The scorpion did not sting anyone, but the flight from Houston was delayed three hours and as a precaution a new aircraft was arranged for the flight.

One month before that, a scorpion stung a passenger on another flight out of Houston. It fell on the man's head from an overhead bin. The passenger was stung when it landed on his plate and he picked the creature up.

A Native American Mosquito Can Transmit Zika Virus



The only mosquitoes in this country that we knew were capable of transmitting the dangerous Zika virus were *Aedes aegypti* (the yellow fever mosquito) and *Aedes albopictus* (the Asian tiger mosquito). These mosquitoes are both more common in warmer, southern areas of the country (although the Asian tiger mosquito is found in some northern states as well), and both invaded from other parts of the world.

So it was a surprise that a study just published in the *Journal of Medical Entomology* proved that one of our primary native mosquitoes can also transmit Zika virus. *Aedes vexans* (known as the Inland Floodwater Mosquito) is actually the most abundant mosquito in most areas of the country. It could potentially transmit the virus in northern areas where the other mosquitoes aren't found.

The research was conducted in laboratory tests, so it remains to be seen how dangerous this mosquito is in actually transmitting the virus in outdoor conditions.