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Pest Patrol News

Health Care—Prevention is Best



With health care getting more expensive, complicated, and time-consuming, it

really pays to take steps to protect your family, pets, and yourself.

One important cause of health issues is pests. By eliminating or greatly reducing pests indoors, people are bitten less by spiders, ants, fleas, and other biting and stinging pests, and they also get sick less often.

Pests transmit diseases to us in different ways. Creatures like flies and cockroaches carry many different kinds of

disease-causing organisms in and on their bodies. They spread these when they crawl across a surface, and in their droppings. Flies also regurgitate their food, then drink it again. Flies typically carry a load of 500,000 disease organisms on the surface of their bodies—and many more than that inside their bodies!

Many insects transmit diseases directly into our blood stream when they suck out our blood. For instance, ticks transfer pathogens to us that cause Lyme disease and many other diseases. Mosquitoes transmit West Nile virus, Zika, malaria, dengue fever, and many other diseases.

Breathing in airborne insect debris is another problem. Just a few years ago it was discovered that the deadly hantavirus is transmitted when people breath in dried, airborne bits of mouse feces containing the virus. And it is now well documented that a major cause of asthma are the bits of airborne feces and dried insect parts of various insects, especially cockroaches.

These are just some of the many important reasons that make our professional pest control services an essential ingredient for maintaining great health.

Cockroaches Through History

A common myth about cockroaches is that they have been around, unchanged, for 300 million years. New research shows the fossils from back then aren't really anything like modern-day cockroaches. The oldest cockroaches are closer to 125-140 million years old. Still, that is a considerable amount of time. These pests are truly a marvel in design when it comes to multiplying, surviving, adapting to changes, and spreading.

The three major cockroach species—American, Oriental, and German cockroaches—despite their names, all originated from North and West Africa. They spread world-wide by hitching rides on early trading ships. German and Oriental roaches found their way from Africa to Europe in the Middle Ages, then reached America several centuries later via early ships from Europe.

Sailing ships became so infested with



cockroaches that sometimes the entire store of provisions was in danger of being eaten or spoiled by these scavengers. In a desperate, but futile, attempt to deal with this situation, ship captains sometimes held official "roach hunts." A typical prize for a thousand cockroaches was a bottle of brandy. The *Danish Navy Annals* of 1611 A.D. records one hunt of this sort that yielded 32,500 cockroaches.

That's a lot of brandy!

Today cockroaches are a common and widespread pest. They are found virtually everywhere, even on offshore oil platforms and in heated facilities in the Artic. Besides being a nuisance and embarrassment, they spoil food, spread disease-causing germs, and cause serious allergies. In addition, they love to crawl into warm, tight places, and have been known to damage everything from computers to clocks and radios.

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Place weather stripping on the bottom, side, and top of all outside doors—anywhere where you see light coming in. Old weather stripping may no longer be making a good seal, and it may be time to remove and replace it. Good weather stripping can help keep out pests, as well as cold air.



How pests view your home.

Another New Ant Invades

A new ant was discovered in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 2017. The *little yellow ant* is a tropical species that is native to Madagascar and has slowly been spreading around the world. It is likely already in other warmer areas of our country but just hasn't been discovered yet.



This ant is extremely small—less than 2 millimeters long, or only .07 inches. That's much smaller than almost all other ants, so it is easy to not even notice it. But what it lacks in size it makes up in sheer numbers. Think of inter-connected super colonies of *millions* of worker ants, with not one, but *thousands* of egg-laying queens in each colony. By the time they are detected going into a home, it is likely that their colonies are gigantic—that's what happened when the first little yellow ants were discovered. These ants become so numerous that it can outcompete other ant species, and has the potential to become the dominant ant in each area it invades.

Fortunately, the little yellow ant does not bite. But at this time very little is known about this new invader.

More Pests Coming



Many of our worst pests are not natives, but came from other parts of the world via ships and planes. As modern transportation has improved and

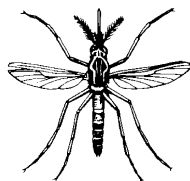
travel between countries increases, more pests are accidentally being introduced into the U.S.

Inspectors of the U.S. Department of Agriculture are charged with finding and intercepting these pests at airports and shipyards, and they stop many thousands of destructive pests from entering our country every year.

According to the U.S. General Accounting Office, increasing travel has multiplied the workload of these inspectors, making pest invasions more likely.

If you go to another country, please don't bring back fruit or any other items that may contain pests!

What about the Zika Virus?



Here's a bit of *good news*. Many people thought that we would see an explosion of mosquito-transmitted Zika cases in 2017 in the U.S. and around the world. But it never happened.

As you will recall, in **2016** the Zika virus, and the devastating birth defects it causes, exploded in Latin America and the Caribbean, and this spilled over to the U.S. There were 5,000 Zika cases reported in the U.S. from travelers who were bitten by mosquitoes in other parts of the world and returned here with the virus, plus another 224 cases of local transmission where people were bitten and contracted the disease in Florida and Texas.

But in **2017**, there were only about 367 travel-related cases of Zika in the U.S. There were only two cases of suspected local transmission, plus another four cases where the virus was acquired through sexual transmission. This reduction was seen in other areas of the world as well. For instance, Puerto Rico had 35,000 Zika cases in 2016, but less than 500 in 2017. This type of drop-off in infections is a pattern that has occurred with other viruses similar to Zika—when some of the human population is exposed and develops an immunity, the percentage of susceptible people to infect drops, and the virus loses steam.

Zika will continue to be a highly important mosquito-transmitted virus to be cautious about. There will likely be occasional flare-ups in different areas, and no one knows how long the immunity will last. If many people in a region lose their immunity, we may have more very dangerous outbreaks. It is important to remain vigilant about this mosquito-borne virus because it causes not only birth defects, but also ongoing neurological effects in adults.

Crickets Fight Back if...

Cricket fights have been part of Chinese culture for thousands of years. One problem with battling crickets is that once defeated in a contest, a cricket loses its aggressiveness and won't fight again for about 24 hours.



But German entomologists discovered a trick to restore a cricket's will to fight within minutes of a lost battle. They simply throw the cricket up into the air, forcing it to fly briefly.

The scientists also tried tumbling crickets in a tube, and shaking them in cupped hands, but these were not nearly as effective as forcing crickets to fly.

163 Year Old Poem

This pest poem, written about 1855, still rings true today.

As spring approaches,
ants and roaches,
from their holes come out,
and mice and rats,
in spite of cats,
gaily skip about.
Bedbugs bite you,
in the night,
as on the bed you slumber,
while insects crawl
through chamber and hall.



--Henry R. Costar, *Costar's Rat, Roach, Etc. Exterminators*. New York City.