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Pest Patrol News

Fall Invading Pests

Many pests begin looking for a suitable place to spend the winter as the weather starts to change this time of year. Unfortunately, homes and other buildings are common overwintering places for these unwanted "visitors," and their visit often ends being an extended stay.

People are often surprised by the huge numbers and variety of pests that invade in the fall. They include well known fall invaders like *boxelder bugs*, *crickets*, *ants*, *cockroaches*, *cluster flies*, *mites*, *wasp queens*, *beetles*, and *rats*, *mice*, and *wild animals*, as well as many newer pests such as *multicolored Asian lady beetles*, *brown marmorated stink bugs*, *Western conifer seed bugs*, and newer species of



invading *ants*, to name a few!

Normally pests spend the winter in an old hollowed-out stump, space under bark or under leaf litter, or in an old rodent or other animal hole. A home that stays warm and dry even when the weather becomes harsh outdoors, or provides

food, is highly attractive to pests.

Many of these pests will wake up and come out of the walls on unusually warm days from late fall to early spring. They can become quite a nuisance, stinking up the house, staining curtains, spoiling food, and causing other problems as they crawl and fly around indoors.

Fortunately, the ongoing maintenance service we provide helps keep these pests under control. If a few pests do make their way indoors, usually the quickest way to get rid of them is to either remove them by hand, or vacuum them up.

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

If you place houseplants outdoors and then bring them back in, inspect them carefully to make sure they are not bringing in unwanted "hitchhikers." Some pests may be feeding on the plant itself, and others—like ants, earwigs, sowbugs, etc.—may be hiding in the soil.

Rats and Mice Alert!

If you are hearing the *pitter-patter* of little feet, it may not be the feet of those you love! Cooler weather causes large numbers of mice and rats to invade homes and buildings. They are looking for new food sources and a drier and warmer place to live and multiply.



There are many tell-tale signs that rats or mice have invaded. You may hear their scampering or gnawing sounds late at night, or you may see evidence of their presence, including their droppings, gnaw marks, or tracks in flour or dusty areas. Along their paths you may see signs of urine, or darkened smudge marks from the oil and dirt in their hair. Other rodent signs, to name a few, include rat burrows, caches of hoarded food, and over-excited pets.

Though both rats and mice are well adapted to living and thriving indoors, they have very different habits. As the neighborhood pest experts, we know our prey! For instance, mice readily investigate new objects in their territory, but rats are cautious. Mice are nibblers, while rats will settle down and take more time to eat larger amounts. Mice can survive long periods without water, while rats normally need water daily. Mice have small territories compared to rats.

If you, or your friends or neighbors, have mice or rats, call us to control them. The sooner we start on the problem (before they have become well-established and more numerous), the quicker we can "clean 'em out!"



Listen honey, there's a waiting list a mile long for that hole-in-the-wall!

Dwarf Deer Tick Found



Deer ticks crawling on you can be hard to find, especially if they are immature ticks. Now an adult female deer tick has been found feeding on a person in New York State that is only 1.5 millimeters (.06 inches) long. This is about *half* the size of the usual deer tick.

This is especially a concern because deer ticks are frequent Lyme disease carriers. Tiny ticks are probably just as likely to carry and transmit Lyme disease, but are more likely to go unnoticed on a person's body. The scientists are calling this an example of dwarfism, but as of yet no one knows how common these tiny ticks are.

This year ticks are of even more concern than normal because many areas of the country are reporting increased numbers of tick bites. In addition, the percentage of ticks that carry the pathogen that causes Lyme disease is higher than normal this year, according to the tick-testing laboratory in Connecticut.

Boozy Beetle Bores into Lawn Mower Gas Tanks



lawn mower gas tanks.

That's crazy! Don't they realize gasoline will kill them? They don't find out until it is too late, and they have already damaged the gas tank. Apparently it is the alcohol in the gas that they are strongly attracted to. Since most gasoline these days contains alcohol, a lot of gas tanks could be damaged by this pest.

The camphor shoot borer is not native to this country. It was first reported in 2004 and is currently found from North Carolina to Texas, and is still spreading. These beetles are mostly active in the spring, so keeping plastic gas canisters and mowers in an enclosed shed might be helpful in the spring. Keeping the outside of fuel canisters free of spilled gas also may help.

Headless Bees Still Sting



Recently a person wearing socks, but no shoes, was walking in her garden near some lavender when she stepped on the abdomen of a honey bee and was stung.

Upon closer inspection, she found the ground was littered with the abdomens of honey bees. Apparently California scrub jays like to eat honey bees, but they consume only the head and thorax, discarding the abdomen with the stinger in it. (Maybe they've learned from being stung by the abdomen, plus the venom sack has a bitter taste.)

Still-fresh detached honey bee abdomens are fully functional—the muscles in the abdomen will still push the stinger forward, and the muscles that operate the venom sac automatically pushes venom into the wound.

Since other birds may have learned to do this same thing, wearing shoes wherever bees are buzzing about would be a wise thing to do.

Mosquitoes Breeding at Gas Stations

A recent study published in the journal *Medical Entomology* found that mosquitoes are unexpectedly breeding in windshield wash basins at gas stations.



The discovery of mosquito larvae, pupae, and emerging adults at nearly one third of the gas station wash basins inspected was surprising because normally you would expect the soapy windshield wash water to kill them. The study found the Asian tiger mosquito, which can transmit the Zika virus, only inhabited basins with clearer water. Another mosquito, the southern house mosquito, was breeding in basin liquid that had a wide range of color and cloudiness, including some that seemed to have high levels of detergent.

This study was only done at gas stations near Raleigh, North Carolina, but it is probably a nationwide problem in gas stations that don't change their water at least weekly. It is really surprising how some mosquito species so easily breed in any manmade containers, and how adapted they are to living with us.

Zika Virus Reached Miami at least Four Times



A recent ground-breaking study using sequencing of the DNA from the Zika virus found that the virus reached Miami not just once, but at least *four times* last year, and potentially *up to forty times*.

The study also found that there was a direct correlation between the number of mosquitoes and the number of Zika cases—when the mosquito control campaign lowered the number of mosquitoes, it stopped new locally-transmitted cases from occurring.

Although Zika infections could break out in most areas of the country, Miami is especially susceptible to outbreaks of the virus because it is home to *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes that are very good transmitters of the virus, plus it has more people who travel there from Zika-infested areas of the world. Even though Zika has spread throughout Central and South America and the Caribbean, most of the Zika lineages in Miami were traced to strains of the virus from the Caribbean. Over half of the international travelers that enter Miami by air or via cruise ships come from the Caribbean.