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# Pest Patrol News

## Pests Are Still Active

You would think that pest problems would be gone this time of year, but unfortunately, that is wishful thinking. Many pests can breed and multiply all winter indoors, thanks to central heating. Here are just a few pests that are problems during late fall and winter, and what to do about them.



**Christmas trees**—Various pests take up residence in Christmas trees, then become active when you bring them into a warm home. Shake trees well before you bring them indoors, or hose them down and let them drip dry before bringing them in.

**Holiday feasts**—Crumbs and spills attract all sorts of pests. Clean them up, place trash in containers with tight-fitting lids, and empty dishes and pans in a sink full of soapy water if you will not be cleaning them that night.

**Woolen items**—Clothes moths and carpet beetles attack wool clothing and anything else made of wool. Clean clothing is less likely to be attacked than worn or dirty clothing.

**Fall invaders becoming active**—pests that invade in late August and

September, like certain kinds of flies, stink bugs, and others, may “wake up” on warmer days and start falling out of cracks and crevices. Some of these can stain curtains and walls. Vacuum up small numbers.

Also watch for **ants** nesting indoors, pests coming from **firewood**, invading **rats and mice**, and **bed bugs** brought in from travels or overnight guests. Because of these and other pests, ongoing pest services are important in making your life healthier and better, and helping to protect your belongings.

## Thank You!

We want to say “Thank You!” We value your business and many referrals, and appreciate the opportunity to eliminate pest problems, protect your property, and make your lives healthier and happier.

We wish you Peace, Joy, & Prosperity throughout the New Year!

## Keep Rodents Out!

Rats and mice have been multiplying all year outdoors. They are fast breeders—in just 8 months, 24 mice can multiply into 2,000 mice! As the weather gets colder this time of year, rodents are searching for a better place to nest and feed. Your home looks mighty good to them, so it’s wise to eliminate places where they may be coming in.



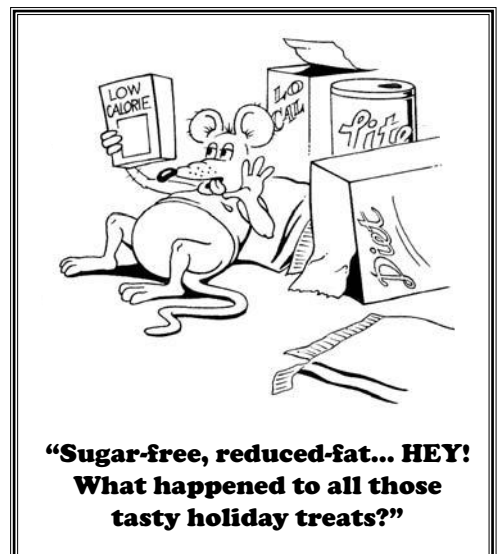
An adult mouse can get through a hole as small as a dime to get into your home. A young mouse can get through an even smaller hole—just over 1/4 inch in diameter. A young rat can get through an opening as small as a quarter. So eliminate all openings 1/4 inch and larger, and you just may prevent hordes of rodents from coming indoors.

One common way rodents get

indoors is through holes where pipes, TV, electrical, and phone lines pass through walls. They also come in through gaps around ventilation openings, clothes drier vents, and chimneys. Gaps under house and garage doors are common entry places. *Keep in mind that if you can fit a pencil under a door, a mouse can squeeze through that space.* They enter through cracks and openings in brick and cement foundations as well.

Seal all these gaps with caulking, cement, copper or steel wool, or metal plates. Check vent openings and replace any wire mesh that is broken.

If rats or mice do get indoors, or you see signs of them outdoors, call us to get rid of these and other bothersome, damaging, and unhealthy pests.



**“Sugar-free, reduced-fat... HEY! What happened to all those tasty holiday treats?”**

## Bobcats:

### A Backyard Pest Threat



Bobcats are very secretive creatures that few people ever see, but they have increased in number and are now occasional problems nationwide, even in urban and suburban

areas. In the 1970's and 1980's their populations dropped partly because they were being hunted extensively for their furs. But as prices for their furs dropped and many states started regulating hunting them, their populations surged. A survey in 2010 showed that their numbers have tripled since their lows.

Bobcats are about twice as big as an average house cat, and have a short, "bobbed" tail.

Like coyotes and other predators, they kill and eat people's pet dogs, cats and backyard chickens. They are fierce hunters and can even kill animals larger than themselves, like full-grown deer, although this is infrequent. Their main diet is small prey like rabbits, squirrels, insects, and birds, including chickens and wild turkeys.

For those of you living with wild areas near you, keep your small pets safer by not letting them out at night.

## Safety Corner



Every 78 seconds, and most of these fires occur during the winter months. Remember to watch for and fix potential fire hazards at home and work, such as frayed electrical cords, space heaters near draperies, bedding, or other flammable

items, children playing with matches, and smoking in bed.

Fires are also started by unattended large Christmas tree lights (not LED's) on dry trees, and unattended candles and open fireplaces. Also, a certain number of fires of "unknown origin" are started by mice gnawing on electrical wires or mice building nests of flammable materials.

## Dirty Clothes Attract Bed Bugs



In a just-published study, when bed bugs were released into an empty room that had bags of clean and dirty clothes, they were much more likely to seek out the bags of dirty clothes than the clean clothes.

Bed bugs use odors in our skin as an important way to find us and get a blood meal. These odors remain on our clothes after we wear them. In the study, the "dirty" clothes were worn for just three hours—long enough to pick up our human scent.

What does this mean? If you are in a hotel or anywhere else that may have bed bugs, having dirty clothes and shoes on a bed, or on the floor (especially near a bed) will increase the likelihood that bed bugs crawl into the pile of clothes or shoes and be carried home with you, potentially starting a new bed bug infestation. Based on these new findings, it would probably be better to have worn items in a sealed plastic bag, and when you get home, empty the entire bag contents directly into the washing machine.

## Ant Causes Eye Problems



We are still discovering unexpected ways pests cause problems. An ant called the *little fire ant* causes eye lesions that can hinder vision or even cause blindness, according to a recent article in the *Journal of Medical Entomology*.

It has been suspected for many years by many scientists and veterinarians that the little fire ant can cause lesions of the cornea, called leukomas. But there has been no proof, and the cause of the condition was debated in the medical community.

The little fire ant, about as long as a penny is thick, has a painful sting, like other fire ants. It often falls from trees when the wind blows. If it gets on an eye of a person, pet, or wild animal, the natural instinct is to blink, which triggers the ant to sting. Apparently it is the toxin the ant injects that causes the lesions.

The little fire ant has spread from Central and South America and is now in parts of Florida, south Texas and Hawaii. The eye lesions were first reported in cats in Florida in 1979, and later in dogs and other animals. Soon after the ant invaded Hawaii in 1999, veterinarians, in areas where the ants had invaded, started seeing animals with these eye lesions.

Interestingly, people in parts of Columbia, where the ant is native, have long attributed the eye lesions to the ants. As early as the year 2000 there were reports that these people knew the ants caused the eye lesions because they had experienced the ants falling into their eyes while they worked in the jungle.

## New Pollinator Stamps

The U.S. Postal Service has issued a series of five beautiful stamps depicting insect pollinators. Two of the stamps have honey bees and three have monarch butterflies, all pollinating different native flowers. The stamps pay tribute to the beauty and importance of pollinators, and our need to protect them.

