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SPRING 2021

Pest Patrol News

Ant Season Starts!

It's no wonder ants are a problem in so many homes and businesses. There are about **10 thousand trillion** of them on earth. (That's one followed by 16 zeros!) You likely have a million or so ants living very near you.

When you think about it, our homes and businesses provide ants with everything they are looking for—food, water, and shelter. In fact, if ants could talk, *they would surely thank us* for providing them with such fine food and accommodations!

Ants thrive for a number of reasons.

We have all witnessed their *amazing food-finding abilities*. Each colony sends out hundreds or thousands of scouts every day to find new sources of food and water. Once they make a discovery, they scurry back to their colony, leaving a scent trail as they go. Often within a matter of minutes of the discovery of food, there can be hundreds of ants swarming over their new-found snack!

Stinging by fire and harvester ants, and *damage* from carpenter ants, are serious problems. But ants can also *carry disease-causing organisms* such as the

bacteria that causes common food poisoning. Ants easily pick up germs because they live in the ground and are scavengers that feed on many things, including carcasses of dead animals.

We are the area *ant experts*, and no ant problem is too difficult for us. If you have ants, call us and we will expertly control these and other pest problems so you can enjoy a better and healthier life. Also please tell other people about our expert and friendly services.

Pests Are Increasing

Every year it seems like the never-ending battle against pests is becoming *more fierce*. We increasingly hear about pest problems in the news and from friends, and pests are constantly invading our homes and businesses. What is happening?

For one thing **we are battling a far greater number of pest species today than ever before**. In fact, almost all of our worst pest species did not even originate in this country. Nearly all of our most serious species of mice, rats, ants, cockroaches, pantry pests, and flies came here from other countries, and new pests are arriving every year. With increased worldwide travel and commerce, this is a continuing problem.

We inadvertently increase pest problems in many ways. For instance, *central heating keeps us warm during the winter, but it also allows*

termites and other pests to thrive in areas where they never were a problem before. With people generally spending more time in their homes because of COVID-19, homes are being kept warmer for longer periods than ever before. Pests are quick to take advantage of any food, water, or suitable shelter we unwittingly provide them.

In addition, NASA states that temperatures have risen about 0.23 degrees Fahrenheit per decade in the last 50 years. **Warmer temperatures** can cause more pest problems. An increase in temperature of just a couple of degrees results in increased winter survival of many pests, longer pest seasons that allow them to reproduce over a longer period, more pest-transmitted diseases, and new pests to battle.

We want you to know we are here, ready for the battle, and proud to be protectors of your property and health!

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Any bird nests under your eaves can have various blood-sucking and scavenging pests living in them. When the young birds abandon the nests, these pests also leave, and may find a way to crawl into your home. It's best to remove these nests right after the young birds vacate them.



Hello...hello? Oh, they must have cut the line!

Tick Behavior and Lyme Disease

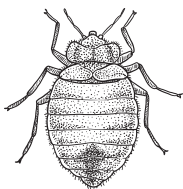


There has been a long-standing question as to why Lyme disease, caused by a tick-transmitted pathogen, is so much more common in northeastern states and some mid-Atlantic states than in southeastern states. The same blacklegged tick species is in all those places, from Maine to Florida and west from Minnesota to Texas.

A recent study found that northern ticks have a tendency to favor *mammals* like mice and deer when they look for a host to feed on, while southern ticks prefer the blood of *lizards*. Lizards, as it turns out, are not nearly as good hosts as mammals for the Lyme disease-causing bacteria, and lizards are much less likely to pass along the bacteria to ticks that feed on them.

Another important difference is that southern ticks usually stay below leaf litter when seeking a blood meal, while northern ticks tend to climb to leaf tops and twigs, where they are more likely to land on a passing human.

The Pandemic's Affect on Bed Bugs



Here's the good news: Because of the COVID-19 virus, more people are working from home, and there is less travel both locally and globally. This has resulted in a decline in the number of new infestations of bed bugs.

Here's the bad news: Because people are spending more time at home, those bed bug infestations that do get started grow faster and are often much more severe, with more bed bugs. After all, with humans at home more hours, bed bugs have a much more consistent blood supply. They are not just in and around beds, but also more common now in places like recliners and sofas where people spend a lot of time.

Spiders may Inject Something Worse than Venom

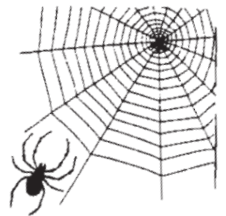
The vast majority of spiders fortunately have fangs that can't even penetrate human skin, and even fewer spiders have venom that is strong enough to affect us. Yet various skin reactions and infections are often blamed on spider bites. What is the real story here?

A recent study of the *false widow spider* in Great Britain revealed that the venom from their bite can cause a few hours of pain, no worse than a wasp sting. Yet when this spider and two other species were collected and their fangs were swabbed for bacteria, 22 *bacteria species were found, 12 of which were potentially harmful to humans.*

So it wasn't the venom that was the most serious problem—it was the fact that these bacteria could be injected into skin by a spider bite, and that the areas around the puncture marks might become infected by bacteria. Bacteria can cause inflammation or other mostly very local symptoms around the puncture marks. Please note that any kind of prick or lesion in skin can become infected—a spider bite is just one of many causes.

Most of the bacteria collected were common and widespread, but the researchers found that some of them demonstrated various levels of resistance to many antibiotics, potentially making treatment more difficult. Fortunately all the microbes could be treated with ciprofloxacin, a common antibiotic.

This new research was published in *Scientific Reports*.



Can a Mouse Squeeze through A Dime-size Hole?



A recent test confirmed that mice can not only squeeze through a hole the size of a quarter and a nickel, but even a dime. The dime-sized holes required larger mice to contort their bodies to make it through, but this is something mice are good at.

Amazing! Take a dime out of pocket (if you still keep change in it). It's really small, but it gives you a good idea of just how small a hole a mouse can squeeze through.

4-Foot Lizards Spreading

The *Argentine Giant Tegu* is an exotic pet lizard with characteristic spotted scales. Not a problem, until you realize that these invaders can grow up to four feet long, and are now successfully breeding in the wild.

These reptiles were imported into this country from South America, and they have escaped or been released by pet owners in a number of places. They have been breeding in the wild in South Florida for more than a decade, and besides other places in *Florida*, have also been spotted more recently in the wild in *Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas.*

These giant lizards will eat most anything they can fit in their mouth, especially *eggs, birds, reptiles, and even crops.* In South America they are a common problem breaking into chicken coops to steal the eggs. As they spread and become more established in our southeastern U.S. they may also threaten many of our native species, including sea turtles and other endangered animals.

