

Bed Bugs

(*Cimex lectularius*)



The bed bug gets its name because it is commonly associated with human sleeping beds - where it often seeks refuge during daylight hours to come out at night to feed on the person sleeping in the bed.

The bed bug is an ectoparasite of primary humans but will infest poultry as well.

Appearance

Adult bed bugs are about 6.4 mm long and reddish brown, with oval, flattened bodies.

Location

Bed bugs prefer to hide in cracks and crevices during the daytime and come out to feed on the host's blood at night, usually while the host is sleeping. Infestations are usually detected by the welts and irritation caused by the bites, and the faecal smears and blood spots visible on pillowcases, sheets and mattresses. Heavy infestations of bed bugs are also accompanied by a distinct odour.



Biology

Females lay up to 5 eggs per day into cracks and on rough surfaces and cement in place with a transparent cement-like substance. Eggs are 1mm long and white in colour. The female can lay up to 540 eggs in total. There are 5 nymphal instars with a blood meal needed for each stage.

About 3-10 minutes are needed for each blood meal where saliva is injected containing an anticoagulant. Developmental time egg to adult is 21 days in 30° Celsius to 120 days at 18° Celsius. Humans are the preferred host as the bare skin is exposed during sleep.

Habits

Bedbugs are very effective at hitchhiking and can easily be transported. They harbour in cracks and crevices throughout a building during the day and come out at night. In bedrooms the first place to look for bedbugs would

be on the back end of headboards mounted on walls. Typically you would find bedbugs in the mattress buttons and beading and in the bed frame and from there they will migrate to areas under picture frames and even in wall paper.

Clutter is the bedbug's best friend and must be eliminated. The main clue to infestation is the evidence of small red to reddish brown faecal spots clustered on surfaces near harbourage areas, bedbug moult skins and with heavy infestations an obnoxiously sweet bedbug odour will be detected.

Control

Great care must be taken to treat the mattress, box springs, upholstery and the bedding itself. All bedding must be washed in an extremely hot washing cycle. A residual contact insecticide must be used together with a total release fogger to eradicate bedbugs.