

Bed Bugs

Although bed bugs were practically eliminated from the United States in the 1940s and '50s, they are making a comeback. Populations are now common in Kentucky, especially in multi-unit structures like hotels, apartment buildings, dormitories, and other buildings where many people come and go. Bed bug infestations are not related to filth or unsanitary conditions; they will infest the most expensive resorts and luxury homes. While bed bugs have not been implicated in the transmission of disease, infestations must be taken seriously. Bed bugs can cause painful bites and their presence can bring stress and significant expense to a household.

Bed bugs are small, flat, reddish-brown insects that emerge, mostly at night, to feed on human and animal blood. During the day, they hide in the seams of mattresses, behind headboards, between bed slats, and other locations that are adjacent to sleeping areas. They are also sometimes found where people commonly sit and rest, like couches or armchairs. Householders can work to prevent bed bug infestations by taking care while traveling and when bringing second-hand items into their homes—infestations typically originate when an infested suitcase, clothing item, or piece of furniture is brought indoors.

Diligence can be useful to prevent infestations, but bed bugs and their eggs are very small and can be overlooked. Once bed bugs have established inside a home, control will only be effective with the help of a pest control professional. Multiple treatments are often required. If you find insects in a bedroom and are not sure if they are bed bugs, bring them to your County Extension office for confirmation. If you have bed bugs, contact a pest control professional to get the elimination process started.

For detailed travel tips and other information for bed bug detection and prevention, see our factsheet:

Bed Bugs

<http://www.ca.uky.edu/entomology/entfacts/ef636.asp>



Bed Bug. (Mike Potter, University of Kentucky)



Travel Tip: To help guard against bed bugs while traveling, take a moment to inspect beds. A small flashlight is useful for dimly-lit areas. Image (left) courtesy of Mike Potter, University of Kentucky.

Bed bugs can cause painful itchy bites. Image (right) courtesy of Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org.



This factsheet is only an introduction. For more detailed information, follow the links in the text that lead to the University of Kentucky's collection of entomology factsheets (ENTfacts). If you cannot access these files on computer, your County Extension office can print a free copy for you.

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