



Bed Bug Talking Points

Biology

- Bed bug infestations are increasing dramatically throughout the country – including here in Arizona.
 - Bed bugs are small (1/4 inch+/-), brown, oval, flattened insects that feed on blood of people.
 - Bed bugs usually feed at night and hide during the day.
 - Bed bugs hide in tight cracks and crevices such as joints of bed frames, box springs, mattress seams, behind headboards, behind pictures, in peeling wall paper, along edge of carpets, wall sockets, laundry, etc.
- Bed bugs are not known to transmit disease.
 - For many people, bed bug bites cause no reaction at all, and as a result, bed bug infestations can go un-noticed for many weeks. For other people bed bug bites cause itchy welts similar to mosquito bites. Scratching the itchy bites can result in secondary infections. In rare cases, bed bug bites can cause allergic reactions that require medical treatment.
 - Bed bug infestations can cause some people to lose sleep and/or cause stress and anxiety.
 - In 2010, the CDC and EPA issued a joint statement defining the growing bed bug problem as a “pest problem of public health significance.”
 - Bed bugs are equal opportunity pests. The presence of bed bugs is not a reflection of a person’s cleanliness or economic status.
 - Bed bugs often spread to new locations by hitching rides in suit cases, back packs, bed rolls, used mattresses and other furniture, cardboard boxes, etc., and can even infest clothing of people who often sleep in their clothes.

Surveillance & Control

- Bed bug infestations are being reported in a wide variety of settings, including houses, apartment complexes, hotels, nursing homes, stores, offices, hospitals, schools, dormitories, moving company warehouses and trucks, merchandise distribution centers, etc.
- Combating the spread of bed bugs in Arizona will require the diligence and cooperation of everyone, including the pest control industry, homeowners, landlords, hotel management, store management, public health partners and many others.
- Bed bug infestations are difficult, and often expensive to eradicate. Infestations are easier to control if they are discovered early.
- Possible signs of bed bug infestation include seeing the bugs in cracks and crevices, dark blood spots (black, brown, dark red) along mattress seams, blood spotting on bed sheets, cast skins from molting bugs, sweet musty odor, and unexplained bug bites on exposed skin.
- Getting rid of bed bugs requires Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM includes intensive inspection to find the hiding places, sealing of cracks & crevices, placing mattresses and box springs inside mattress covers, removal and bagging of infested articles, thorough vacuuming, washing and drying dirty clothes, and linens (hot cycle), bagging un-washable items that can’t be chemically treated or washed, and appropriate targeted and repeated pesticide treatments. Other methods being used by some pest control companies include bed bug sniffing dogs to find the bugs and heat treatments (“dry steam”), etc. Bed bugs do not like temperature extremes. Some bug infested items can be treated by bagging it and putting outside in the summer sun/heat. Whenever possible, pesticide treatments should be done by trained professionals. If people do apply their own pesticides, they should be sure to use a product that is labeled for indoor use, labeled for bed bug control and always follow the label instructions. People should never spray their mattresses, bedding or themselves with pesticide! NOTE: some pesticides when improperly used (e.g. some foggers) can cause the bugs to disperse and spread.

Roles of the Community

- The role of public health in combating bed bugs is primarily one of education about recognition and prevention, bed bug identification, and for many environmental health programs – inspection of hotels and possibly apartment complexes.
- The role of pest control is also one of education to homeowners and using IPM methods to control bed bugs.
- The role of property managers/landlords is to set tenant policies that help to prevent the introduction and spread of bed bugs, such as requiring incoming tenants to make sure their belongings are free of pests, discouraging tenants from bringing in discarded or donated items, and requiring prompt reporting of bug infestations! Early detection and control is critical, otherwise the infestation will spread throughout the complex. Property managers, tenants and pest control professionals must work cooperatively to eradicate the pests. Engaging in denial and blame will only make the problem worse.
- The role of homeowners is to prevent bed bugs from coming into your homes (see prevention tips below), or if they do occur at home - control them (use IPM methods and work with pest control professionals) and take steps so as to not spread them further.

Prevention Tips:

- Carefully inspect any used or new furniture before bringing it into your home. If you see evidence of bed bugs – don't accept it.
- Travel Tips:
- Check your hotel room for signs of bed bugs. If you see signs, report it to the front desk and get another room. Or, if necessary go to a different hotel. If you have to spend time in a bed bug infested place, keep your belongings sealed up inside garbage bags as much as possible.
- Keep suitcases on the luggage rack.
- Do not leave clothes on the floor, and seal up dirty clothes in a bag. Keep clothes in the bag until you are ready to wash them. Wash & dry dirty clothes on a hot cycle.
- Do not bring luggage back into your home without inspecting it first. When in doubt, luggage can be sealed inside garbage bags until you have time to inspect it and unpack.

For more information on bed bugs, contact:

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