

Year-Round Insect Pests in the Home



Indian meal moth—adult



Indian meal moth—larva



Sawtoothed grain beetle—adult



(Dermestid beetle) Warehouse beetle—adult and larvae



Bed bug—adult

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In Nebraska, most pest infestations are seasonal because of our cold winters. The vast majority of pest problems occur between April and October, when temperatures are warm outdoors and pests are more active.

But, there are some pests that actually live inside our houses and even some that cannot survive very well without us. These are pests that live on food inside our houses or feed on us. Because we keep our houses warm, these insects continue to develop. Here are a few of the most problematic pests.

Kitchen Pests

GERMAN COCKROACH. The German cockroach is the most serious cockroach pest in kitchens because kitchens have everything this cockroach needs to live well. It needs water, food, places to hide during the daytime and warmth. German cockroaches must



German Cockroach—adults, nymphs and egg case

drink water or have moist food every two days or so.

Many people believe that only dirty people have cockroaches, but this isn't true. Every kitchen has the potential to harbor a cockroach problem. Several years ago, I was in the home of a very nice older lady who had a bad cockroach problem. She was very neat and tidy—an immaculate housekeeper. The cockroaches were so hungry they were eating the paste off the paper labels of her canned goods. She had a drippy faucet that was contributing to the problem.

Eliminating food and water through good sanitation practices will help reduce cockroach numbers. Reducing clutter will help reduce hiding places. In the last 15 years, the biggest improvement in cockroach control has been the development and use of baits. Some active ingredients in bait products include abamectin, boric acid, dinotefuran, fipronil, hydramethylnon, indoxacarb and imidacloprid. Gel baits work well because they provide a moist food. These gel baits will be even more effective if efforts to reduce moisture and food are made.

PANTRY PESTS.

There are some insects that feed on the food in our cupboards. Other than canned goods, just about anything in our pantry is fair game. Sometimes pantry pests come into our kitchen with food from the grocery store. They can get into unopened packages.

We only find the infestation

later when we pour cereal in the bowl and find bugs floating in the milk. A few of the more common pests are:

Indianmeal Moth (IMM). The worm-like larva fouls food by producing webbing. It feeds on seeds, nuts and all types of processed foods. We have even seen an infestation of IMM in marshmallows. Often the first sign of an IMM infestation is the presence of tiny moths in the kitchen/pantry area.

Beetles. There are quite a few species of small beetles that can infest stored products, but the most common are flour beetles, sawtoothed grain beetles, drugstore and cigarette beetles and dermestid beetles.

What is needed to successfully control pantry pests is quite simple but sometimes harder to practice. Find what is infested and throw it away. No insecticides are needed. In fact, if you don't find the infestation, insecticides won't be helpful.

There are pheromone traps available for some of these pests. The Safer® Pantry Pest Trap can be purchased at hardware and discount stores and can be helpful in reducing IMM moth numbers. But, the lure used is the female sex pheromone and only male moths will be caught.

Human Pests

A couple pests feed on you, me or our pets. The one causing the greatest stir in the structural pest control industry right now is the human bed bug. The human bed bug feeds on blood and humans are its preferred host, although it will feed on cats and dogs if people aren't available. There are also old reports of bed bugs being a problem

in chicken houses.

BED BUG. After 40–50 years of nearly being eliminated in the U.S., bed bug infestations started to increase worldwide in 1999. Right now, bed bugs are hard to control with the products currently available. Because they were so seldom encountered, there was no reason for chemical companies to support bed bug research, and research results are now just beginning to emerge.

People acquire bed bug infestations in several ways:

- Travelers can bring them home after staying at an infested hotel or motel.
- Apartment dwellers can get bed bugs from their neighbors because bed bugs easily move between units.
- Acquiring bed bug-infested furniture is another way to get them.
- Having someone stay with you who has stayed in an infested home or apartment
- Moving into a bed bug-infested apartment will get you an instant infestation.

Unfortunately, pesticides available today don't seem to be working very well. It is important to also use non-chemical methods like vacuuming and steam-cleaning infested locations. Purchase a zippered mattress cover to completely cover mattress and foundations to prevent bed bugs from living in the bed. It may be necessary to discard infested furniture.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional information and control methods about these and other pests, go to <http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest> or call extension at 441-7180.

Ultrasonic/Subsonic Devices Not Effective for Pest Control

Various ultrasound and subsonic pest control devices continue to be marketed as safe, effective alternatives to traps and poison. You may see advertisements claiming the devices will safely rid your home of rats, mice, snakes and even fleas and roaches.

About Ultrasonic Devices

Manufacturers' state the ultra-high frequency sound produced by the devices can only be heard by the pests, and not by other animals or humans. The noise is said to be so irritating, the pests either leave the home or die. It is also claimed the devices only harm pests and will not bother household pets, such as gerbils, hamsters, cats and more.

Subsonic Devices

These units produce an ultra-low frequency sound or vibration. Manufacturer's of subsonic pest control devices claim they are more effective than the ultrasonic devices.

Effectiveness

Scientific evidence shows most insects, rodents and other animals hear or sense the same range of frequencies humans do. So if a sound or frequency doesn't bother us or our pets, it also won't bother pests.

Testing has shown sounds emitted by ultrasonic and subsonic devices do not carry very far. About half the energy of the sound or vibration is gone within 15 feet of where the device is placed. There is no sound or vibration left within 30 feet of the device. In addition, objects in front of the device block the signal. Since insect pests and mice hide behind furniture, appliances and in walls, these objects would make the devices useless.

Scientists have concluded ultrasound units do not offer effective or proven rodent or insect pest control. Save your money and your time. For best results with any pest problem, use proven management practices.

Source: Rutgers University

Beginning Beekeeping 2-Day Workshop



Saturday, March 8, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.
Lancaster Extension Education Center,
444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln

Saturday, April 12, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
Apiculture lab, Agricultural Research and
Development Center (ARDC), near Mead

On March 8, you will learn to:

- manage honey bees by understanding their biology and behavior
- identify the best Nebraska honey plants
- locate hives for best survival and production

On April 12, you will learn to:

- manage honey bee diseases
- install packaged bees
- assemble a hive
- harvest honey and beeswax
- prepare your crop for market

Registration fee: \$20 per family (family to include parents and siblings living at home). Registration includes refreshments, one workbook and one lunch. Lunch for each additional family member is \$10.
Please pre-register by calling 441-7180.

Got Deer Problems or Pocket Gophers?

UNL Wildlife Experts
Need Your Help

UNL wildlife experts are looking for landowners who have deer regularly visiting their property during the winter time. They have developed a new deer repellent device they would like to test. It is an audible repellent so it might be necessary to have a significant distance from neighbors.

If you have land with pocket gophers, UNL wildlife specialists would like to speak with you. They need to capture one gopher for a study. If you have had recent activity and would like to help, please contact Stephen Vantassel at 472-8961 or e-mail svantassel2@unl.edu. Note: this is not an extermination program—only one or two pocket gophers are needed.