

Just Like Kids, Head Lice are Back in School

Barb Ogg
UNL Extension Educator

Millions of children in the U.S. get head lice each year. Identifying infestations is the first step toward controlling this human parasite and stopping its spread.

Identification

Adult head lice are about 1/10 to 1/8-inch long and grayish in color. Immature lice are smaller. Head lice are wingless and cannot fly. They do not jump.

There is a great deal of confusion about what viable eggs (also called nits) look like. Female lice cement eggs to the shaft of the hair, about 1/2-inch from the scalp. Viable eggs, often found at the nape of the neck and above the ears, are brown in color. These eggs are oblong, not round.

When an immature louse crawls out of the egg during hatching, the glue is so strong the shell will remain attached to the hair shaft. This shell is white. School nurses and parents often mistake this spent egg for a viable nit.

There are also other particles confused with head lice eggs, including dandruff, hair castes and gel from hair care products. Studies have shown school nurses and parents frequently miss head lice that are present. They also frequently identify children as having head lice infestations by mistaking spent eggs and other debris in the hair with viable nits. When children are identified as



Head lice (highly magnified view).

Barb Ogg, UNL Extension in Lancaster County

having head lice when they aren't present, those children may be unnecessarily exposed to pesticide products. They also may be not allowed to go to school so it is important to accurately identify head lice and live nits.

Head lice only feed on humans and do not feed on dogs, cats or other small animals. Head lice primarily infest children, but will also infest parents, who should be checked if their child has lice. Teachers and daycare providers may also be infested.

Environmental Treatments Unnecessary

Head lice spend most of their time on their host because they get all their food and liquid by feeding on blood. Lice begin to desiccate within 12 hours without a host. Experts believe head lice are transmitted from child to child primarily through head-to-head contact. Children with long hair may pick up lice more frequently than short-cropped hair styles.

One head lice researcher conducted a study looking for lice on floors and desks of a school where more than 20% of the children were heavily infested with head lice. He used a special vacuum with a filter to catch the lice. In this study, no lice were found anywhere other than on the children. Because lice are rarely, if ever, found away from children, it makes no sense to spray insecticides in schools or homes. Vacuuming should be all that is needed. In homes, bedding and recently worn clothing may be

washed and dried in a hot drier. This kills all stages of lice.

Control

Controlling head lice should be the responsibility of parents. Controlling head lice has become more difficult because head lice are resistant to the most common over-the-counter medications. Even when products are used correctly, some lice will not be killed. In addition, these products will not kill viable eggs. A second treatment should be done 7-10 days after the first treatment.

Combing

After head lice control products are used, parents should comb their child's hair with a fine nit comb to remove lice and nits not controlled by the product. Vegetable oil or conditioner can be used to lubricate the hair and make it easier to comb. Use a small pair of scissors to clip individual hairs to remove nits.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A video, *Removing Head Lice Safely*, teaches how to comb a child's hair for head lice. It can be viewed at: <http://lanaster.unl.edu/pest/lice/>. DVD's are also available for purchase for \$10 plus shipping/handling. Four languages (English, Arabic, Spanish, Russian) are available on one DVD. For more information, contact Barb Ogg (441-7180 or bogg1@unl.edu).



Hands-On Termite Training, Sept. 24-25

In September, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension's Community Integrated Pest Management Team will offer a two-day, in-depth training for entry-level termite applicators, home inspectors, regulators and other interested persons. This two-day program will be held Sept. 24-25, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln.

Presenters will represent UNL, Nebraska Department of Agriculture and major manufacturers of termite control products (Bayer Environmental Sciences, Dow AgroSciences, BASF, FMC and Nisus Corp.) UNL presenters will include Dennis Ferraro, Clyde Ogg, Barb Ogg and Shripat Kamble.

This training will include both classroom presentations and hands-on termite treatment of a house. Topics will include termite biology, termiticide calculations, termiticide effectiveness and soil dispersion, baiting systems and Nebraska regulations. Participants will have an opportunity to perform perimeter, sub-slab applications and inspect a home for termites. They will also learn how to choose, maintain and calibrate termiticide equipment.

This program has been approved for pesticide applicator recertification in Nebraska (08W), Kansas (07a) and Iowa (07b).

Early registration before Sept. 11: \$300; after Sept. 11, \$325. Registration includes lunches, breaks and reference materials. Additional details and registration form is online at <http://lanaster.unl.edu/pest/termite.shtml>. Number of participants is limited. For more information, contact Barb Ogg (402-441-7180) or Clyde Ogg (402-472-1632).

When a Bat Gets Indoors

Barb Ogg
UNL Extension Educator

Most people are alarmed to find a bat inside the house, but the first step in removing the bat from the home is to stay calm. If the bat is flying, it is not trying to attack anyone, it is only trying to find a way outdoors.

Open all exterior doors and windows in the room(s) in which the bat is observed. Shut all doors leading to adjacent rooms to confine the bat in the area where entries are opened. Leave the lights on and stand motionless next to a wall or in a hallway leading to the room. Patiently wait as the bat swoops around the room trying to find an escape route. It likely will fly out of the room on its own. Do not wave at or try to herd the bat!

If the bat is at rest on a wall (usually behind curtains or window blinds), the following steps will help you safely catch and release the bat outside.

1. Put on a pair of leather gloves.
2. Get a large-mouthed glass,

cup or plastic container.

3. Approach the bat slowly from one side and place the container over the bat.
4. Slide a piece of cardboard or stiff paper between the container and wall.
5. Carry the bat in the container with the paper lid outdoors.
6. Place the container with lid against the side of a tree 4-6 feet above the ground or other elevated location outdoors.
7. Carefully slide the paper out from between container and tree then slowly lift the container. The bat may not fly immediately, but it will be safe from predators until it flies away.

Once you get the bat removed, it can be important to try to determine why the bat is in the house.

- The bat could be young and inexperienced and hasn't



The big brown bat is found throughout Nebraska.

yet learned how to use its echo-location system properly. This is basically a young bat that has lost its way. This happens frequently in August, when baby bats first become independent from their parents.

- It also could be an adult bat that has accidentally flown through an open window or door.
- If you have had more than one bat incident inside the house during the summer, you may have bats living in or around your house. Common locations include bats roosting behind downspouts or shutters and attics. It would be smart to have your house inspected to see if you need to take measures to keep bats from using your home as a roosting site.

Bats are important ecological organisms because they feed on night-flying insects, but they also transmit rabies. Since bats are so small, some people

Mystery Droppings on the Porch?

The call always starts something like this. "Some animal is crawling on my front porch every night and I can't figure out what it is. It isn't there when I get up in the morning, but its droppings are. Every day I have to sweep droppings off my porch and I am getting really, really tired of doing this. I have put out mouse traps to catch it, but we haven't caught anything."

People are always surprised to hear these drop-



Bat droppings (shown approximate size)

pings were left by a bat. Bat droppings are a little larger than those of a mouse, but have a shiny, slightly iridescent appearance. *see DROPPINGS on page 5*

- don't even know they were bitten. Therefore, Nebraska has adopted new recommended protocol for handling potential bat-human exposures. Assume a person was bitten if:
- He/she awakens to find a bat in the room.
 - A bat is found in the room with someone unable to communicate well (i.e. children, intoxicated or otherwise mentally impaired).
 - The bat made contact with a person.

In these situations, do not release the bat. Take care not to damage the bat's head (no tennis racquets, please). In the Lincoln area, contact the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department to determine where the bat needs to be sent for rabies testing. If the bat is not found within a couple of hours, consult health professionals about needed treatment.

Source: *NebGuide 1667, Bats In and Around Structures.*