

**What's Biting You?**

*continued from page 1*

**FLEAS**

Fleas are wingless, hardened, flattened side-to-side insects with specialized jumping legs. The adult fleas live and feed on the host, which is usually the family cat or dog. Homes without pets can get fleas when they are brought in from outdoors. Flea bites on people typically occur on the lower body.

The larvae, which resemble small worms, live deep in the fibers of the carpet, furniture or pet-resting areas. Fleas can remain in a pupal stage for many months in the absence of a host. Emergence is stimulated by vibration, heat and carbon dioxide, which is why vacant summer houses and condos may appear to be infested with fleas upon returning.

**Arthropods That Inadvertently Bite Humans**

You may ask, "Why? Why would an organism bite humans, if they do not feed on blood?" This is a good question and, unfortunately for us humans, we become the victim of irritating bites from insects that feed on plants or other insects. These insects do not feed on blood, do not inject

saliva or venom, and repellents are not effective against them either.

The **multi-colored Asian lady beetle**

**beetle** and **minute pirate bug** are considered natural enemies and beneficial insects, but they can land on people and bite. Thrips and lace bugs are plant feeders that can also cause irritation to exposed skin. **Western flower thrips** are attracted to bright colors of flowers and may accidentally land on humans wearing bright colored clothing. **Hackberry lace bugs** fall out of trees in the late summer and bite people. Control is not practical as irritation is minor and damage to tree is minimal.



Minute pirate bug (magnified), the tiny bug with the big bite.



Hackberry lace bug (magnified) is a plant feeder that can cause skin irritation.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT BIT ME?**

No. It is important to remember that it is very difficult, if not impossible to identify the pest based on a single individual's reaction. Some people localize symptoms at the location of a bite (swelling, itching, redness), while others suffer systemic reactions which can appear as hives or a rash. These reactions can be immediate or delayed, presenting as a skin irritation or illness 24 hours or weeks after the bite occurred. On the other hand, there is a portion of the population who have no reaction to any bites, including mosquitoes, fleas and bed bugs.

dermatologist. The root cause for your skin irritation may NOT be arthropod-related.

Note: There have been a number of scabies cases in Lancaster County, which is a medical issue. Scabies are mites that burrow under the skin and transmitted through person-to-person contact. Scabies causes severe itching and irritation, especially at night. Doctors can perform a skin scraping to confirm scabies and then prescribe treatment.

**CAN I HAVE MY SPECIMEN IDENTIFIED AT THE EXTENSION OFFICE?**

Yes. If you have a clear photo or a specimen of an insect or arthropod AND the information to accompany it, you can email [jgreen17@unl.edu](mailto:jgreen17@unl.edu) or drop it off at the Extension office, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A, Lincoln (open Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.). The information should include the county where the specimen was found, location or environment, size of pest, number found, length of time the problem has persisted and any key information. As mentioned previously, specimens cannot be identified by bites.

**WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I'VE BEEN BITTEN?**

Collect the critter that bit you! Bag it up, put it in a container or stick it to a piece of paper so you can get it identified by an expert.

If you suffer a bad reaction, doctors can help determine the proper medical care for your situation. Without the specimen or eye witness to the bite, it is impossible to confirm and challenging to prevent future bites. Seek medical attention if symptoms worsen.

If you feel as though you are being bitten, but have not found any insects or arthropods, contact a doctor or

**Got Wildlife Damage? Basic Control Options**

**Soni Cochran**

*Extension Associate*

Wildlife can be enjoyable to watch, most have beneficial roles in our

ecosystem and some are important game animals. However, there are times when wildlife conflict with human activities (or vice versa). For homeowners, identifying what animal you have (you may only see the droppings, hear a sound or see a

"hole") and understanding the needs of the animals (what it needs to survive) are key to managing any potential damage. Below is a chart with just a few of the common animals we receive calls on in our area.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Detailed information on each animal is available at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest> and <http://wildlife.unl.edu>. You can also contact Extension at 402-441-7180.

ANIMAL	EXAMPLES OF DAMAGE	OPENINGS	FECES (SCAT OR DROPPINGS)	BASIC CONTROL OPTIONS
<b>BATS</b> Male = No Special Name Female = No Special Name Young = Pups Group = Colony	Invade buildings and roost in sheltered entryways on homes. Colonies can also establish behind shutters on homes.  Do not exclude bats from buildings in June and July due to young in the colonies.	Enters buildings through openings 3/8" or larger.	Droppings are 1/8-1/4" long, black, shiny and dotted with speckles.	Exclusion: All months except June and July.  If you have a bat colony in your home and want to work with a pest control company, get on their calendar now before they are booked up for late summer/fall.
<b>MICE</b> Male = Buck Female = Doe Young = Pinky Group = Colony	Invade buildings. Nest, eat and contaminate food and grain, gnaw electrical wiring, burrow in insulation.  In addition to damaging property, mice and rats carry many potentially dangerous diseases which can be spread to humans and livestock.	Enters buildings through openings 1/4" or larger.	Droppings 1/8-1/4" in length and narrow at one or both ends.	Exclusion, trapping, sanitation, rodent-proof buildings.  Ultrasonic devices are not effective.
<b>RATS</b> Male = Buck Female = Doe (unmated) or Dam (pregnant) Young = Pup or Kitten Group = Mischief	Invade buildings. Nest, eat and contaminate food and grain. Gnaw electrical wiring, water pipes, doors, windows, walls, ceilings and floors. Will prey on chickens, ducks, pigeons and eggs.  In addition to damaging property, rats carry many potentially dangerous diseases which can be spread to humans and livestock.	Enters buildings through openings 1/2" or larger.	Norway Rat droppings similar to mouse, larger - 3/4" in length.	Exclusion, trapping, sanitation, rodent-proof buildings and livestock feed storage areas. Predator-proof poultry coops and poultry runs.  Ultrasonic devices are not effective.
<b>SQUIRREL</b> Male = Boar Female = Sow Young = Called babies or infants when still in the nest Group = Dray or Scurry	Invade buildings. Eat planted seeds, mature fruits, corn, grains and food intended for birds. Damages trees and land. Chews wiring, some squirrels cause damage to vehicles parked outdoors.	Enters buildings through openings 1 1/2" or larger.	Droppings are about 3/8" long, 1/8" in diameter and rounded on the end.	Exclude from buildings, gardens and fruit trees. Trim back tree limbs. Use squirrel-resistant bird feeders or add baffles. Work with a pest control company if trapping is needed in the case of a squirrel in a building or damaging a vehicle which can't be moved into a secure building.
<b>OPOSSUM</b> Male = Jack Female = Jill Young = Joey Group = Passel	Rarely invade homes, but may enter garages and sheds if there is access. Will go under porches and decks. Eats garden produce and tree fruits. They may also prey on chickens, ducks, pigeons and eggs. Sometimes invades structures.	Not destructive or strong. Enter buildings through already available openings of 3" or larger.	Droppings are cat-sized and are not in just one spot.	Exclude from buildings, trim back tree limbs, secure garbage cans, pet doors and add sturdy chimney caps and vents on homes. Do not leave pet food outdoors. Work with a pest control professional if trapping is necessary. Predator-proof poultry coops and poultry runs.  Exclude from areas where horses may come in contact with opossum feces (droppings) in their feed/forages.
<b>RACCOONS</b> Male = Boar Female = Sow Young = Kit Group = Nursery or Gaze	Can invade buildings. Damages crops and gardens, particularly sweet corn and watermelons. Rolls up or shreds sod looking for grubs. May break into coops and eat poultry and eggs.	Can enter 4-6" hole. Very strong and can be difficult to exclude. Excellent climbers.	Droppings are cat-sized and left in one spot. These raccoon latrines can be a source for roundworms. Use caution in clean-up.	Exclude from buildings, trim back tree limbs, secure garbage cans, pet doors and add sturdy chimney caps and vents on homes. Do not leave pet food outdoors, especially overnight. Work with a pest control professional if trapping is necessary. Predator-proof poultry coops and poultry runs.
<b>SKUNKS</b> Male = Buck Female = Doe Young = Kit Group = Surfeit	Dig multiple small, cone-shaped holes in lawns looking for insects and grubs. Eats garden vegetables, fruit, bees, nesting waterfowl, game birds and their eggs. If they enter poultry coops they will mainly feed on eggs.	Den openings 3-5". Striped skunks rarely climb fences.	Most people don't pay attention to droppings - concern is spray and odor. Skunks do not emit odor unless provoked to spray.	Exclude from buildings, under porches and decks, secure pet doors. Do not leave pet food outdoors, especially overnight. Work with a pest control professional if trapping is necessary. Predator-proof poultry coops and poultry runs.