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The Pest Bulletin

McKINZIE PEST CONTROL
A McKINZIE INC. COMPANY

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Busted Myths

False information is often shared so frequently that we eventually believe it is true. Here are three myths we have recently heard that we want to correct.

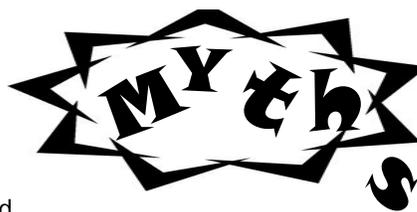
Myth #1: Only dirty homes need pest control. While it is true that some homes that have clutter and messes have more than their share of pest problems, even clean homes can have pests. We've gone into some of the cleanest homes possible and found serious pest problems. Pests crawl or fly in from outdoors, or they are unknowingly brought in on furniture, in infested food packages, and many other ways. That's just the world we live in. Remember, pests can (and do) affect all of us, and

there is no reason to be embarrassed.

Myth #2: Rats and mice avoid water. Actually, Norway (black) rats are excellent swimmers. They are sometimes carried long distances in floods or by rivers. They can swim across ditches and through sewer water—whatever it takes. Even mice can stay afloat in water for many hours.

Myth #3: To get rid of bed bugs just throw out the mattress. Forget it! Yes, bed bugs are most likely to hide in a mattress, box springs and bed frame, but they can be hiding in many other cracks

and crevices in a room. Throwing out the mattress means that 1) you've just harmed someone else, who may pick up the mattress and now must deal with bed bugs, and 2) most likely you'll still have bed bugs, but now you'll need to pay for control plus buy a new mattress. Bed bugs need to be controlled by a professional—don't waste precious time and money by trying to do it yourself.



Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

It's a good idea to check the weather stripping around all the exterior doors of your home to make sure they still have a tight seal. Replace any weather stripping that has become deformed or flattened with age. Gaps not only let in cold winter air, but pests as well.

Pests Waiting For Spring Rebound

What do pests do to survive the winter cold?

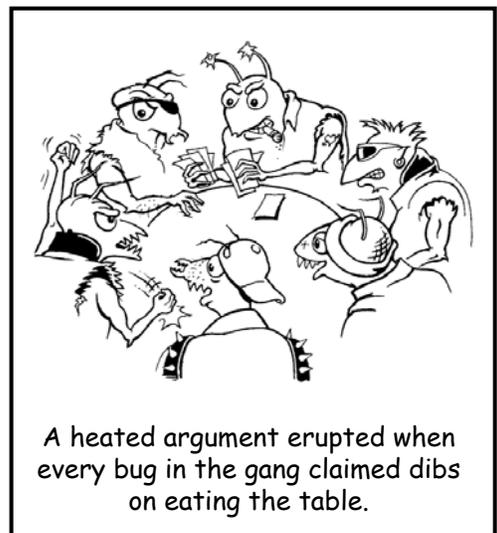
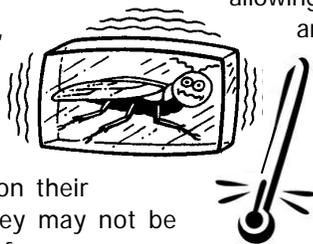
Indoor pests like rats, mice, cockroaches, ants, and even bed bugs are still active during the winter months, eating and multiplying and carrying on their lives as pests, though they may not be multiplying as quickly as before.

But what about all the pests outdoors? These mostly have stopped multiplying, but they have diverse methods of surviving adverse weather. They may crawl under bark or in cracks in walls that offer protection from extreme weather. Some kinds hide beneath rocks, boards, or sidewalks that keep them warmer. Others survive the winter only as eggs or pupae, both of which are often more weather-resistant than adult pests. Some pests go into a state of diapause where their body functions slow down

(much more so than hibernating bears), allowing them to survive until conditions are better again.

Some insects, including carpenter ants, actually produce glycerol—a kind of antifreeze—that allows them to survive colder temperatures without their bodies freezing. Ants nesting in the ground also move up and down in the ground to stay warmer, and they cluster together to stay warmer on cold days.

So while we hope that cold weather will kill off enough pests so that the spring and summer will be pest-free, unfortunately it doesn't happen like that. If certain pest species are living in our area, they have already adapted themselves to our conditions, and unfortunately we'll see them again and again every year. We'll be ready for them!



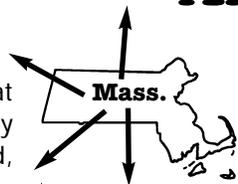
A heated argument erupted when every bug in the gang claimed dibs on eating the table.

Coffee Breaks Can Be Unhealthy

Germs—the microscopic bacteria, fungi, and viruses that cause us to get sick—are spread by people coughing, by pests such as flies and cockroaches as they crawl over food, and in many other ways.

A study showed that one way germs are spread around offices is on contaminated sponges and dishcloths. In the study, coffee mugs “cleaned” with a communal sponge or dishcloth actually wound up having **more germs** on them than before they were cleaned. It turns out that the sponges and cloths harbored a wide variety of germs from all over the office.

Don't despair—you can easily kill the germs! Either clean the sponge in a dishwasher, or dampen it and place it in the microwave for two minutes. Other ways: replace the sponge weekly, or use a sudsy—and disposable—paper towel to clean your mug.



Another Fire Ant is Spreading

While the red imported fire ant is the most invasive fire ant in this country, we have other invading ants that inflict painful bites. Last summer one of these, the *European fire ant*, appeared in yards in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This ant originally arrived in Massachusetts from Europe during the early 1900's on imported plant materials. They continue to spread to areas throughout the Northeast, especially in grassy and marshland areas, and in the last few decades they have become more serious pests. In this case they were found in places where children were playing, in the garden, and under the deck.

These invading ants are one of many ant species that negatively affect wildlife populations, and they are expected to cause increasing problems for homeowners in the years ahead.

A Major Rat Outbreak

About every 50 years in north-eastern India, an amazing event occurs: the entire bamboo forest flowers, sets seed, and then dies. This is not a small event, because the bamboo forest covers over 16,000 square miles, and when it sets seed it produces over 22,000 tons of bamboo seed per square mile. The bamboo flowering began in 2004 and will continue into 2011.

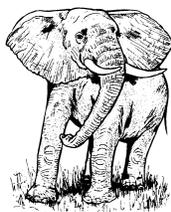


Rats eat the bamboo seeds, and the rat populations have been exploding because of the glut in their food supply. The “rat armies”, as the locals call the huge populations of rodents, wipe out rice crops and then descend on stored food supplies. In addition they spread diseases and devastate many kinds of wildlife.

The 2008 cyclone Nargis made the problem even worse because it devastated farmland and caused new crops of rice to be planted at more staggered intervals, which ensured a more continuous food supply for the rats.

Ants Are Mightier than Elephants

Here's a case where tiny insects change the behavior of animals about a *billion times* more massive than they. Researchers recently discovered that African elephants won't eat foliage of trees that have ants on them—they will even avoid their favorite tree species. Elephants avoid any trees with ants because the angry ants crawl up inside the elephant's sensitive trunks and sting them.



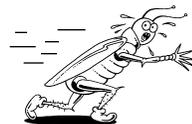
The ants have no effect on tree-feeding giraffes, because these animals use their long tongues to swipe the ants away from their short snouts.



Insect Trivia

Q. When a cockroach sprints across a kitchen floor, how many of its six legs are actually used?

A. Only two. It was always believed that cockroaches ran with all six of their legs, but slow motion photography has shown that at top speeds, roaches actually rear up on their two hind legs (their longest legs). Their body is tilted up 23 degrees, and their hind legs are moving back and forth 27 times a second—this is moving! Wind tunnel tests show that when the roach is sprinting, the air pushes against it with so much force that it actually holds up the front of the roach's body.



Q. How fast can a fly see something coming—like a fly swatter—and change direction?

A. A fly can see an object coming and change direction in an astonishingly fast 30 milliseconds—which is why the extra speed of a plastic fly swatter caused by its ‘snap’ as it nears the fly, is much more effective than simply a hand hurtling towards it.

Humorous Actual Reports

The following are verbatim humorous examples of some actual newspaper police reports and want ads.

16000 block of Myrtle Avenue—9/17—Someone reported a family of raccoons in a tree throwing rocks at people walking by. When police arrived on the scene, the raccoons were gone.

Animal complaint: the Marshall Police Department responded to Cypress Court for a report of a crazed duck in the area. Officers searched the area and found only relaxed ducks.

Rentals—Housing two bedroom, sublease, nice areas, BARGAIN rent. Drawback: Big hairy spiders drop off bedroom ceiling at night.