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The Pest Bulletin

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Spider Questions

Here are three questions our customers often ask.

Where do those wispy strands of dust-laden webs come from indoors? These "cobwebs" are tangles of silken webs that the spiders have either left behind when they moved to a new spot or were controlled by our treatments. Once a spider stops cleaning its web, dust and dirt start accumulating. Some spiders also use strands of silk as safety lines in case they jump and miss their target.

Is it good to have spiders around because they prey on other pests?

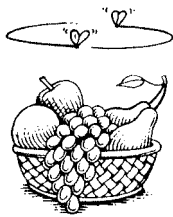
Spiders eat only a tiny percentage of the pests in and around a building—not enough that you would notice a difference in the number of pests. Spiders must have a good supply of insects, so they would work against themselves if they wiped out their food supply. Rather than being a good sign, a thriving population of spiders is an indication of a pest problem—the spiders have lots of food.

Why does spider control require more than one treatment? Spiders are experts at reinfesting an area. Many young, light-weight spiders



practice what is called "ballooning." They simply let out a strand of silk that easily catches even a mild wind, literally pulling them up into the air and dispersing them. Spiders that are heavier and larger (like tarantulas and jumping spiders) can't balloon even when they are young; but they do crawl to new areas. Most of these spiders don't build webs to trap their prey—they either wander about looking for prey, or wait and ambush unsuspecting prey as they pass by.

Those Small Pesky Indoor Flies



Everyone has had problems with small indoor flies. Most people think they are all fruit flies, but actually there is a wide variety of small

flies found indoors. The following are the common ones and some of the places they breed.

Fruit flies (vinegar flies) usually have bright red eyes. They are attracted to fruits and vegetables in the early stages of decay—when the sugars and starches are being fermented by yeast. Besides decaying fruits and vegetables, they can also breed in dirty mops, recycling bins, and at the bottom of garbage cans. Beer, wine, cider, vinegar, and yeast attract them, too.

Drain flies (moth flies) go after food that has decayed to a black goop—especially the "bio-films" that form on

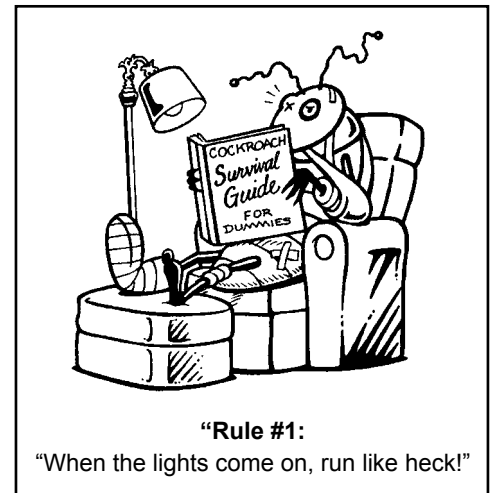
the inside of drains. They are sometimes called moth flies because they have hairy wings that give them a fuzzy appearance. The adults are strongly attracted to lights.

Phorid flies breed in materials that are even more decayed than what drain flies prefer. Organic materials in drains, garbage, dirty mops, and sewage line leaks are common breeding places. Phorid flies have a distinctive arched shape, and are darker than fruit flies.

Fungus gnats often breed in the soil of potted plants, especially soil which is high in organic material and over-watered. But occasionally they can be found in moldy sliding door tracks, leaky roofs, and anywhere there is fungus or decaying organic materials the larvae can breed in. The adults are thin, with long legs, and are sometimes mistaken for small mosquitoes.

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

When landscaping, don't choose plants that produce an abundance of fruits, nuts, and seeds, unless you plan to harvest them. When these drop and rot, they attract and provide food for a variety of rodent and insect pests.



"Rule #1:
"When the lights come on, run like heck!"



Bed Bug Alert

Here's a comeback kid for you—that you wish never came back! Unlike previous generations, most people living today have never even seen a live bed bug. But that is changing, because bed bugs are back! Across the country, bed bug complaints are steadily increasing, at the rate of 20-30% or more a year in some areas.

These nasty bugs sneak out of their hiding place while you are sleeping and quietly suck your blood for five to ten minutes, leaving telltale red, itchy welts on your skin in the morning. They leave dark red spots on bed sheets, and you can actually smell heavy infestations. The adults are oval, wingless, and only about 1/5 inch long. They hide during the day in cracks in the bed frame and mattress, as well as in other crevices around the bed, and in places like trains, buses, and theaters, too.

IMPORTANT: If you are *traveling*, especially out of the country, be on the look-out for bed bugs anywhere you sleep. Many infestations initially get started when travelers bring some home in their luggage or clothing.

Those Home Makeover Shows



Those new home makeover shows on TV have really become popular. Organizing and de-cluttering are a big part of these shows. But did you know that *de-cluttering* doesn't just make a place look bigger and better? It also reduces the number of places where certain pests breed and hide.

Pests like rats, mice, cockroaches, and silverfish can breed most anywhere, but they do even better in cluttered places. So pretend millions of people are watching, and do some serious de-cluttering! Your options for each item are to sell at a garage sale, recycle, throw away, or perhaps to keep.

Your Questions Answered

This is a great survival question, but don't test it at home!

Q. *If I am being chased by a swarm of **angry bees** and come upon a lake, should I jump in or keep running?*

A. **KEEP RUNNING!** If you're in fairly good condition, you can easily outrun honey bees. They will soon tire and turn back—that's the good news! But they may hang around a pond for awhile, looking for you.

However, if they are Africanized

honey bees, you'll have to run a lot further.

They will pursue someone for over 187 yards (remember that a football field is only 100 yards between goal posts), while our more docile honey bees will chase someone for only 27 yards. Jump in water only if you can't keep running, or if no other shelter, like a vehicle or building, is available.



A New Cockroach Pest

The Turkestan cockroach is a new cockroach to this country, and it is spreading. It was first seen in 1978 at a military base in Lathrop, California. Apparently it was a stow-away in household goods brought back from the Middle East. It has now also been reported in Arizona and Texas, and could eventually spread throughout much of the Southern United States.

A recent report shows that the Turkestan roach is now infesting schools in Los Angeles. Sometimes they are so numerous that custodians report it is difficult to walk the grounds on hot summer nights without stepping on them. These roaches live primarily outdoors and in sewers, but come indoors when it is dry, searching for moisture. Male and female Turkestan roaches look very different from each other—the males are easily mistaken for American cockroaches, and the females look very similar to Oriental roaches.

Did You Know?

● **Twenty-six percent** of all electric cable breaks and 18 percent of all phone cable disruptions are caused by rats gnawing on the wires.



● **Watch for silverfish.** They are a common pest, but nocturnal, secretive, and seldom seen. Sometimes you find them in bowls and bathtubs, where they fall in and can't crawl out. Silverfish can digest cellulose, so they eat irregular-shaped holes in paper, but they especially like the glue in book bindings, wallpaper, etc. Amazingly, some kinds can live for over three years.

● **Ever thought of eating a tarantula?** Our more adventurous readers may want to know that undercooked tarantulas taste terrible! But here's important advice if you want to attempt cooking them. You must singe off the hairs using a hot fire or blow-torch before cooking. The hairs are irritating, and can cause all sorts of problems in your throat and stomach when swallowed.