

# PEST CONTROL DEPARTMENT

## **BEDBUGS**

Bed bugs are small, brownish, flattened insects that feed solely on the blood of animals and people. The common bed bug, *Cimex lectularius*, is the species most adapted to living with humans. It has done so since ancient times.

## **LIFE CYCLE**

Adult bed bugs are about 1/4 inch long and reddish brown, with oval, flattened bodies. The immature (nymphs) resemble the adults, but are smaller and somewhat lighter in colour.

Bed bugs do not fly, but can move quickly over floors, walls, ceilings and other surfaces. Female bed bugs lay their eggs in secluded areas, depositing up to five a day and 500 during a lifetime.

The eggs are tiny, whitish, and hard to see without magnification (individual eggs are about the size of a dust spec). When first laid, the eggs are sticky, causing them to adhere to substrates. Newly hatched nymphs are no bigger than a pinhead. As they grow, they shed their skin five times before reaching maturity. A blood meal is needed between each successive moult. Under favourable conditions (70 - 90° F), the bugs can complete development in as little as a month, producing three or more generations per year. Cool temperatures or limited access to a blood meal extends the development time.

Bed bugs are very resilient and can survive months without feeding.

Bed bugs are active mainly at night. During the daytime, they prefer to hide close to where people sleep. Their flattened bodies enable them to fit into tiny crevices - especially those associated with mattresses, box springs, bed frames, and headboards, picture frames and loose wallpaper seams. Bed bugs do not have nests like ants or bees, but do tend to congregate in habitual hiding places.

Infestations have been associated with social deprivation and poor standards of hygiene. However bedbugs can easily be introduced into any home following the introduction of infested second hand furniture or in luggage following foreign travel. Bites will be evident on parts of the body exposed at night and produce swelling irritation.

## **CONTROL**

In view of the many potential and often inaccessible harbourages available to these insects, effective control of these pests is often very difficult and because of this, the help of a professional pest control officer should be sought. Bedding and clothing can be washed and tumble dried, mattresses can be steam treated or disposed of.

**PUBLIC INFORMATION SHEET No3**

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