

Furry Little Visitors

continued from page 3



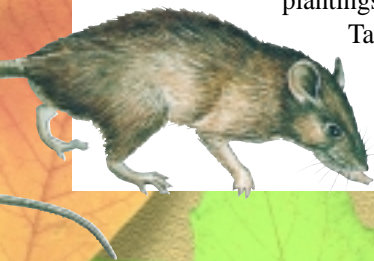
maniculatus. Other wild and domestic rodents can harbor and spread as many as 200 human diseases. In many urban and suburban settings, Norway Rats, *Rattus norvegicus*, may live mainly outdoors in spring and summer, but come inside in the autumn and winter. In warmer coastal and tropical areas,

Roof Rats, *Rattus rattus*, may live mainly outside during wetter seasons and move inside during drier seasons.

They eat and contaminate our food and gnaw and mess up our homes with urine and droppings. They have been reported to interrupt our internet access and even start fires by chewing electric wires. More than 1/5 of the “fires of unknown origin” in the U.S. are probably caused by rodents gnawing matches or wiring.

You can help prevent these problems by:

- 1 Cleaning up thoroughly any spilled food, garbage, pet food or grain which might attract rodents. Don't forget autumn decorations hung on doors or walls and don't leave food or water out in a pet's dish overnight.
- 2 Keep all garbage in tightly-closed, metal cans and keep the cans and area around them clean as well.
- 3 Clean up and remove all trash and rubbish, especially near your buildings.
- 4 Be sure all outside doors, windows and vents fit snugly, with no gaps and are kept closed, especially at night. A mouse needs only a 3/8-inch crack or hole to get inside.
- 5 Seal up any hole or crack in the outside of any building that is big enough for a rodent to enter. Pay special attention to places where wires, pipes or other utility lines enter a building.
- 6 Keep plants and shrubs trimmed back at least 12 inches from the outer surface of any building. These can provide rodents food, shelter and an easy way up to higher entry points. Rodents climb very well.
- 7 In urban settings, trim back or remove any extensive plantings of low-growing shrubs, especially Taxus or Junipers. Norway rats have a strong tendency to establish extensive outdoor burrows under these two types of shrubs.



TRAINED AND CERTIFIED PEST MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS ARE ESSENTIAL TO TAKE CARE OF TODAY'S CHALLENGING PEST PROBLEMS

There is no way to accurately assess the economic losses and human suffering caused by insects, rodents, birds, and other disease vectors and pests. While the total losses may never be known, most people are irritated just by their presence.

People go to great extremes to stay one step ahead of pests. Many rodents and insects seem ingenious in their successful attempts to enter your home. Some pests may be carried indoors in bags, on clothing or on pets. Others, such as ants, beetles, crickets, rats and mice, may crawl through cracks and crevices at doors, windows or the foundation to gain entry.

Knowing when to call an expert is important. Finding the places pests hide during all of their development stages and targeting management efforts requires a competent, knowledgeable and technically trained specialist.

Each of our pest management professionals (PMPs) is that kind of specialist. Each has the special training, experience and tools necessary to assure adequate protection against destructive pests.

Although there are many over-the-counter products available to the public, the products' success rates greatly depend on several factors. Without proper training and supporting information, a homeowner could easily apply an ineffective treatment, or apply it to the wrong sites, and get little or no control of the target pest. This could lead to frustration and additional, unnecessary or excessive applications. Indiscriminate spraying and fogging can be harmful to homeowners and their families.

Safety is very important as well. Professionalism within the structural pest management industry helps assure homeowners that pests can be controlled without harming human health or the environment. Our PMPs first identify and monitor the offending pest(s) and then plan and carry out an effective program to control the pests, eliminate the problem and institute future preventive measures; while safely protecting the inhabitants and their environment.

Call our trained professionals today to schedule an appointment.

PEST

Gazette

Autumn “Houseguests,” Unwanted Ones, With Four or More Legs

As autumn days start getting shorter and outdoor temperatures start falling, little visitors may begin to invade your home. Rodents, bugs, beetles and flies can suddenly show up inside your house by the tens, hundreds or even by the “hundreds of thousands,” as often occurs with cluster flies or Asian “Ladybugs.”

Many of these, such as the “ladybugs,” cluster flies, and face flies do little or no real harm to us, our structures or our health, but they can build up to almost unbelievable numbers in a short time. They seem to be everywhere, and in everything. They often become active during warm spells in winter and usually become a serious nuisance again when they try to find their way back outside in the spring.

Autumn bugs, such as stink bugs, look a bit dangerous, make buzzing sounds when they fly and give off an offensive odor when handled. Their presence in large numbers com-

bined with the fact that they crawl over everything make stink bugs a real bother. Asian Ladybird beetles can inflict a bothersome, slightly painful bite on such areas as the back of your hand, and they are often hungry because their natural prey are usually gone by mid-autumn.

Rodents and other urban wildlife can pose serious health risks by harboring and spreading disease such as rabies, plague, hantavirus or leptospirosis. Many of them can carry fleas, mites and ticks which may bite humans as well. They often cause damage to structures by chewing or tearing holes in walls, doors or screens; and damage or contaminate our food and clothing with their urine and droppings.

If you have problems with these unwelcome pests, contact us. We are ready to help you identify, survey for, and control them using an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach.

Molds and Moisture

Mold is being mentioned a lot in the news lately, especially with regard to the potential health problems it poses in homes. Every mold is a fungus, two or more are called fungi (pronounced: fun-jye), and they all belong to their own separate kingdom (one of the five kingdoms) of living things on Earth. Fungi used to be considered to be plants which could not produce their own food. Common examples of fungi

include: the yeasts that are used to brew beer or make bread rise; truffles which are an expensive delicacy; various molds used to cure cheeses; the parasitic organisms that cause athlete's foot, histoplasmosis and wheat rust; bread molds; the fungal “partner” in any lichen; common mildews and several fungi which are wood destroying organisms (WDOs). Obvi-

continued on page 2

Molds and Moisture

continued from page 1

ously, not all fungi are helpful, nor harmful. A very wide variety of molds and their air-borne spores are very commonly found all around us but unless conditions are right, they cannot grow.

All fungi require high levels of moisture, a food source and adequate temperatures to grow. Fungi that damage wood need 28-32% moisture content in the wood. At lower moisture levels or temperatures, below about 50 degrees F, these WDOs will stop growing until conditions are favorable again. Moisture is a very important requirement and it can be an indicator that molds (fungi) can or may be growing in that wood (or house). Training, experience and proper tools (e.g., a moisture meter) are needed for an inspector to detect such "conductive conditions" for WDOs. Simply reducing the moisture content of the wood will stop fungus growth. Applying a fungicide can kill the molds in place, but may not prevent re-infestation.

The "molds" (in the broad sense) that we may find in homes, or growing in or on wood, do not all cause significant damage to the wood. Most of them pose little or no significant health threat to people. Nearly all such molds, including those that are WDOs, can sometimes affect asthmatics or people with allergies because most of them can produce and release large numbers of microscopic spores (their means of normal reproduction and dispersal) into the air. These spores can trigger or sometimes even cause various kinds and levels of allergic reactions in humans.

Some molds, like the much-published *Stachybotrys chartarum* (= *Stachybotrys atra*) and a few other species, produce chemicals called mycotoxins which can cause a toxic reaction in people if a large enough "dose" is breathed in or eaten. These molds do not produce these chemicals all the time, but only under certain

environmental conditions. These molds have been suspected (reported) to have helped cause more than 14 infant deaths in Chicago, Cleveland and other cities since 1990. This mold species only grows on cellulose which has been constantly kept very wet, like structural wood which has been flooded for at least a couple of days, or where plumbing has a constant slow leak. These mold species do NOT noticeably damage wood (i.e., they are NOT WDOs). Remember that not all molds (in fact very few species) produce mycotoxins at all, and those can only grow and produce these chemicals under a very limited set of conditions. Accurate identification (ID) of any mold species currently requires elaborate specialized laboratory facilities, reagents, equipment and training. Most home inspectors are not capable of such IDs.

However, our wood destroying insect (WDI) inspectors are trained, experienced and equipped to detect, point out and suggest corrective measures for nearly any moisture condition in your home which would be "conductive" to the development of fungi (especially the WDO fungi).



YELLOWJACKETS - An Irritable Autumn Nuisance, And Sometimes Dangerous

In late summer through early autumn, as the weather gets cooler and the days get shorter, the queens of many yellowjacket species stop laying eggs. New queens emerge, mate and find protected sites to stay over the winter. Yellowjacket workers stop foraging for the colony and go out more often on their own. They are attracted to sweets or syrups, such as the liquid left in the bottoms of soda cans. These and other sweets in and around garbage cans may draw dozens, sometimes hundreds, of such pest wasps. Since they no longer have a colony to provide for, these yellowjacket workers tend to "hang around" garbage cans, soft drinks or any other sources of sweets they find. Some become very aggressive and may try to protect their new food sources, just like they used to protect their colony's nest, and that can lead to people being stung. Such stings can and sometimes do kill allergic individuals (average of about 10 every year in the U.S.).

The first step to solve this problem is to clean up all spilled sweet materials thoroughly, placing all soda cans and anything similar in tightly-closed heavy plastic bags. Wash and rinse all solid surfaces and food or drink serving utensils frequently. Keep all sweet foods, drinks and fruits covered until they are about to be eaten.

To solve such a problem, you may need to contact a professional pest management company, like ours, for help. We can survey the situation, provide immediate knock-down treatments if needed, advise on any sanitation improvements which may be needed and treat garbage areas and containers with the minimum effective amount of a carefully chosen, properly labeled residual pesticide. Control of stinging insects should be left to properly certified, trained and equipped professionals.



BUGS THAT COME IN FOR THE WINTER

Cluster Flies

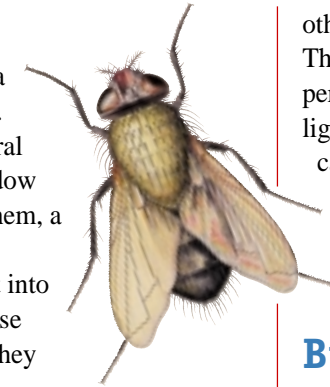
One crisp autumn morning, you open a window to let fresh air into your room. As you raise the window you see several hundred "dead" flies between the window and screen. While you're looking at them, a few flies begin to move. You slam the window shut, hoping none of them got into your house! What kind of flies are these and why are there so many? Why do they seem to be coming to life?

What you see are probably Cluster flies, or maybe face flies and they become pests of homes, schools, hospitals and commercial buildings throughout much of the United States. Cluster fly larvae parasitize (feed inside) a common species of earthworms, *Allolobophora rosea*, during the summer. As autumn approaches, the last summer generations of adults emerge from the soil and look for a nice, warm place to hibernate, i.e. your attic, wall voids or window sills. These hardy little insects can travel more than a mile for a suitable hibernation site.

Cluster flies overwinter and emerge in the spring to breed and lay eggs on the soil near the earthworms which their young then infest. Overwintering cluster flies are the most troublesome because of their sheer numbers. Stimulated by warm weather, they can become active again during any warm spells in winter and again in early spring and try to find openings to go back outside.

Ladybugs

About the time of the first frost, Ladybugs (Ladybird Beetles) may also come into your home through any crack, crevice, open window or hole. They come in and hibernate until spring and do not cause any big problem except for their presence, sometimes in great numbers. They will become active when it gets warm again and try to find their way back outside, where they continue their very helpful work of eating lots of



other insects, especially several kinds of major plant pests. They may also become active during any unusually warm periods during the winter. They will often fly to windows or lights. Some kinds of Ladybugs, such as the Asian Ladybug, can come into a house literally by the thousands. That can be very disturbing to people living in the house. The best thing to do when they become active in the spring is to help them get outside again, alive.

Bugs

Several plant-feeding true bugs, in the insect Order Hemiptera, sometimes come into houses in large numbers. These include the Boxelder Bug, the Western Conifer Seed Bug and several different "stink bugs." In the eastern Pennsylvania region, this includes the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug recently introduced from Asia. Infestations of these bugs are a direct result of their building up a large population on their host plants near the home they came into. Some of them will fly to outside lights at night, then come in unnoticed when a door or window is opened the next morning. Most of these are large enough to be noticed soon after they come inside.

The best control measure for each of these overwintering pests is exclusion, by sealing up all cracks or other entry points and possibly by applying a residual chemical barrier to deny access to exterior cracks or holes which cannot be effectively closed.

If you notice lots of Cluster flies, Ladybugs or other overwintering bugs in your home, call us and we'll help you identify the pests, evaluate the problem and, if it will help, apply an exterior perimeter treatment which should help keep them out in the fall when they tend to look for likely spots to hibernate.

In the meantime, you can sweep or vacuum these pests from the window or attic and dispose of them. If you use a vacuum, remember to remove the bag when you are finished, seal it in a plastic bag and dispose of it with your normal trash or garbage.



FURRY LITTLE VISITORS

Every autumn, lots of creatures who enjoyed the warm summer outdoors try to come in to keep warm for the winter, too. They also help themselves to food in our pantry, like boxes or bags of cereal, nuts, cookies or dry pet food. They may chew holes through walls, boxes and sometimes even electric wires.

These little creatures can be a lot more than just a nuisance. Several wild rodents, which come into homes in the autumn or winter, spread strains of Hantavirus which sometimes kill people. The biggest source of this virus is the very wide-spread, yet harmless-looking Deer Mouse, *Peromyscus*

continued on page 4