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FALL 2022
Vol 34 • No 3

The Pest Bulletin

Pests Invade in Fall

Now and during the months ahead our weather starts a gradual change, causing changes in pest problems as well. Some of the fall-invading pests in our area have already begun looking for food indoors, or a more protected place to spend the winter. Unfortunately, homes and other buildings are exactly what many of the fall invaders are looking for.

Some common fall invaders:

Rats and mice are like a "pest from hell"—who wants them? These have been multiplying outdoors all season, and now are searching more aggressively for ways to get indoors.



Ladybugs, particularly the spreading multi-colored Asian lady beetle pictured at left, can become a major invader. This insect was introduced to control crop pests, and then started unexpectedly becoming an indoor pest. Some people are allergic to this beetle when it invades in large numbers.

Wasp and **yellowjacket** queens overwinter in protected places and start new colonies in the spring.

Ant colonies are huge this time of year, and some species become constant invaders.

Many kinds of **crickets** invade homes in the fall, sometimes in large numbers

Other common fall invaders include **stink bugs, boxelder bugs, cluster flies, clover mites, elm leaf beetles, root weevils, cockroaches, millipedes, and centipedes.**

It's during these months ahead that our professional pest management services are especially important to protect you and your pets, as well as your home and belongings, from pests that can either cause damage or can sting, bite, or spread diseases.

Rat & Mouse Myths

O.K. Let's have some fun! We hear so many falsehoods about these pests. Cover up the answers and let's see if you can figure out the **one true statement** below, before you read the answers.



2. FALSE. Everyone wishes they would work, but those devices you plug into a wall outlet don't kill rodents, so the pests are unfortunately still around. Also, university tests find the devices either don't repel rodents at all, or that their repellency is weak, very temporary, and ineffective. They are a waste of money for consumers.

3. FALSE. Rats do bite—mostly sleeping persons, and especially infants. Most bites occur on fingers and limbs, with some bites on faces. It is believed that the rodents are attracted to food residues or odors on a person's hands, fingers, or mouth. In some cases a disease, *rat bite fever*, results from these bites.

4. TRUE. They have poor vision beyond three feet, but they really don't need to see further. They can sense motion up to 50 feet away, and their sense of smell and hearing are both far superior to ours. They can even locate objects to within a few inches just by sound.

QUESTIONS—True or False?

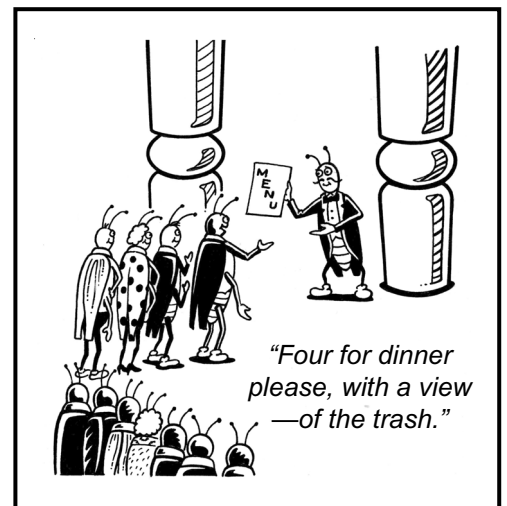
1. Rats and mice are only a problem in dirty, unsanitary homes.
2. Those electronic gizmos (ultrasonic and related devices) effectively get rid of rodents.
3. Rats and mice spread diseases, but at least they don't bite.
4. Rats and mice have poor eyesight.

ANSWERS:

1. FALSE. Unfortunately, even the cleanest homes and offices experience rodent problems. These pests are very adept at finding food, and living on little or no water. However, reducing available food, water, and shelter is important in ongoing control of these common pests.

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Dense shrubbery flush with the ground provides shelter and hiding places for rats, mice, voles and other rodents. Pruning out branches near the ground eliminates this and reduces "rodent curb appeal." A good height to clear up to is about 18 inches off the ground.



Wildfire Starts When Man Burns Spider

A man tried to burn a spider with his lighter while in some hills in August. But instead, the surrounding brush caught fire, resulting in a fire that spread rapidly and burned 60 acres. It took 100 firefighters, plus helicopters and air tankers, to put out the fire.

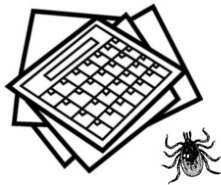


In these cases the person who starts a fire is held accountable for the expenses involved in fighting it. It is estimated that the costs will be well over \$200,000!

Please, never use fire, whether it be in your yard or in your home, to try to kill pests!

Ticks Lived for 27 Years

A biology professor had some extra African soft ticks, so what did he do with them? He kept them alive, at an ideal constant temperature and humidity, to watch them year after year. To everyone's amazement some of these ticks lived 27 years—much longer than any other ticks have been recorded to live.



But wait, there is more. At one point he didn't feed the ticks for eight years, and they still survived! This is all amazing, and a little scary.

A Monster Snake



Did you know? The remains of a giant prehistoric 2,500 pound, 48-foot long (as long as a bus) *Titanoboa* snake was discovered in a Columbia coal mine in 2005. Sometimes truth is actually bigger than fiction, because the snake is larger than the giant predator snake that terrorized and ate people in the movie *Anaconda*.

Do Earwigs Crawl into Ears?

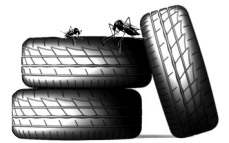


Human ears are dark and moist, and pests occasionally crawl into them. But according to data from the John Hopkins emergency department and other hospitals, the most common foreign object extracted from people's ears are *cockroaches*. Other insects removed from ears included beetles, honeybees, and ticks, but no earwigs were recorded as being found in ears.

The idea that earwigs sometimes crawl into ears, as their name implies they must, may have been an early *urban myth* possibly started by Pliny the Elder about 2,000 years ago. Pliny, a prolific author and naturalist who also thought caterpillars originated from dew on radish leaves, wrote that earwigs crawled into people's ears. We don't know if he actually saw an earwig in a person's ear, or just passed on a myth that may have been common in his day—an urban myth that still catches people's imaginations today.

Snow-Covered Tires Help Mosquitoes Survive

The invasive Asian tiger mosquito has been found living further north, in colder climates, than is expected. This mosquito can transmit Zika, dengue fever, and other dangerous pathogens, so the fact that it can survive even where winters are very cold is important.



A recent study measured the January temperatures in abandoned car tires and found that the tires create a microhabitat that is slightly warmer than the air around it. Not only that, but where a layer of snow a few inches deep covered the tires, it kept it even warmer inside the tire. Mosquito eggs can go into a suspended state in cold, and they were able to survive in the tire cavities where they would not have been able to survive outside. The study was done at multiple sites in Wisconsin and Illinois.

Besides tires, there are undoubtedly other types of insulated microhabitats that allow mosquitoes, and many other kinds of pests, to survive where they would not be expected to survive.

A New Name for "Murder Hornets"



The Entomological Society of American recently announced a new name for murder hornets, sometimes also called Asian giant hornets. The official new name is the **northern giant hornet**.

These huge hornets were first found in Washington state near the Canadian border in 2019. The term 'murder hornet' was first used in the United States in a *NY Times* article in 2020. It was such a catchy and alarming name that soon other media outlets and tabloids began using the name. While 'murder hornet' catches people's imaginations, it is certainly misleading. They can kill a person who is stung and is allergic to bee and wasp stings, but the venom is no more toxic than other wasps and bees. The 'murder hornet' name probably came from the ability of these hornets to wipe out an entire honeybee colony, a curious habit shared by another species of large wasp.

Hence, the northern giant hornet will be their new name. But who knows, we'll probably continue to see the old names used in the media.

Good news, as of late August, eradication efforts seem successful and there have been no confirmed sightings of this insect in Washington state this year.