

BED BUGS

An old foe, largely unseen since the early part of the twentieth century, has crept back in to our lives. Bed bugs are once again a problem for all types of residences, including apartments. The little critters are relatively easy to detect. But vanquishing them from any multi-family dwelling is a sizable challenge. The job of controlling these heat seeking, blood sucking wingless insects requires a thorough understanding of the problem, the full cooperation of residents, and the resolve to mount an all-out assault at the earliest possible opportunity.

Bed Bug Basics

Recently hatched bedbugs are about the size of a poppy seed. Adults average a quarter inch in length. They are oval on top, flat on the bottom. Their color may appear as dark brown, tan or dark red. Females lay several eggs every day and as many as 500 in their lifetime.

Bed bugs typically travel 10 or 15 feet, but can travel as much as 100 feet in their search for food. The tiniest crack in a wall can serve as their path to new territories in adjoining apartments and rooms. They expand their travels by hitching rides on pillows, clothing, luggage, and countless kinds of articles transported from one place to another by unsuspecting humans. They are often deposited in hallways and other common areas when infested articles such as mattresses are transported out of a rental unit.

A bed bug's creepy idea of sustenance is human and animal blood. They generally partake of their repast at night while their hosts are asleep. But these resilient little creatures can go about a year without eating. Their ability to survive so long without food, and their penchant for hiding, may lull the unwary property owner into thinking the problem has gone away. Take heed, even if an apartment remains empty for a time, bed bugs may still be in residence, perhaps in the unit next door, or hiding and waiting in any little crevice or crack.

Bed bugs can be found anywhere in an apartment. Typically, the most infested areas are beds, bedding, baseboard/carpet edges, bedroom furniture including nightstands and dressers, and upholstered furniture. Walls and ceilings, clothing and even household appliances are known to harbor them as well.

Many managers who have experienced infestations are adding monthly inspections of these areas to their lists of things to do. The cooperation of residents is crucial and, with the right encouragement, they could be pressed in to service to do their own quarterly inspections. Bed bugs are a problem for all kinds of housing, luxury or affordable, regardless of the condition of cleanliness.

Eradicating

Treating for bed bugs takes a comprehensive assault from all fronts. An experienced pest management professional should be consulted the minute this problem crawls in to your life.

Inspecting all premises is a must. Visually inspecting units also helps in understanding where the

bed bugs came from. Residents must be encouraged to learn to identify bed bugs and honestly report their presence. It all boils down to early detection and prompt professional treatment.

The job of controlling bed bugs requires complete cooperation from staff and residents alike. The tedious and detailed treatment procedures start with a thorough inspection of the entire dwelling. The infested unit and those above, below and on either side must be prepared for complete treatment. All clutter must be removed, personal items must be sealed in plastic, clothing and linens laundered and appropriate pesticides must be applied throughout the units, in all cracks and crevices. It is wise to call in a licensed pest control professional to orchestrate the entire process and apply the required pesticides to all units as well as common areas.

Treatment must also include thorough and repeated vacuuming of infested areas to remove eggs. Follow up treatments, at least two every two weeks, are also necessary.

It will be little comfort to any victim of infestation to know that bed bugs are not known to transmit infectious diseases. The bites are problem enough. Allergic reactions and infections can develop. Even if these maladies were not an issue, the “creep factor” will inevitably cause revulsion from anyone unfortunate enough to encounter bed bugs. Following revulsion, residents will likely look for a response from owners, and possibly legal relief.