

Bed Bug Blog Part 1

In Part 1, you'll discover...

What percentage increase in bed bugs we have had - Has the bed bug problem ever been worse? - The one reason most professionals cite for the rapid bed bug infestation - Why they are harder to kill than roaches - Amount of offspring one female can produce in her lifetime.

BED BUG BLOG, PART 1

Missy Henriksen is with the National Pest Management Association, which is a 75-year-old non-profit organization committed to the protection of public health, food, and property. Pestworld.org is her website, which serves as a comprehensive resource for consumers, media, educators, and pest control professionals.

So welcome, Missy, and thank you for taking the time to answer questions for our owners and property managers, who are very interested in the bedbug problem.

Your study says that bedbugs are up 81%. Have they ever been a problem at this level before?

Well, the National Pest Management Association and the University of Kentucky undertook this study together. We heard anecdotally for years about the problems of bedbugs, and we decided it was really time to try and put our arms around how pervasive the problem is. We have never seen the infestations as large as they have been reported most recently.

Several years ago, some of our members would get a call here, a call there, over the course of a year; one or two calls a year. What the survey found is that over this past year, 95% of professionals in the United States have reported bedbug encounters, and that number really holds true across the globe. In Canada, the number was 98%. In Europe, that number was 92%. Really, because of this pervasive and extensive nature of bedbug infestation, we're seeing now that the problem is a pandemic.

There are a few theories out there that I read on why the problem has grown, but is there one central agreed-upon theory or cause that you can share with us?

The number one reason that most professionals cite for the very rapid increase of bedbug infestation has been increased travel; especially increased international travel. Bedbugs are hitchhiking pests. They travel where we are. They need to be where people are, so they can feed. Their meal is human blood, so as our society has become more mobile, they travel with us, and they need to be with us, unfortunately.

Are they really harder to kill than roaches?

Yes. As a matter of fact, the surveys that we've just referenced indicated that our professionals do consider them to be the most difficult pest to eliminate. They are harder to kill than roaches. They are harder also than ants, which are definitely pesky and quite the nuisance. They are even more so than termites.

That's really why this is not a do it yourself project. If someone suspects that they may have signs of an infestation with bedbugs, it's critical that they contact a trained and licensed professional immediately.

Do you know why they're harder to kill than roaches?

There are a couple of reasons, for bedbugs. First of all, they can lay in hiding for up to a year without a human blood meal, and they're not just in your bed. They're hiding behind your wallboards and electrical sockets, behind picture frames, in your furniture, behind wallpaper; so they may be laying in hiding, waiting to come out for that human blood meal. But remember; they're reproducing during that time.

A female can produce up to 400 offspring in her lifetime, they're very difficult to spot when they're in hiding, and they're very difficult to properly eliminate at each stage of their life cycle. Sometimes the adults can take one type of treatment and then the babies or the nits another. Then sometimes with those eggs that are laid, again there's another course of treatment that may be required. Most of the time, but not every time, the elimination of bedbugs will take several different treatments.

Whereas with roaches, maybe you do one treatment that kills the eggs and the adults?

Yes. Some of the other pests we talked about are also difficult. However, ants, roaches, and termites can be easier to eliminate at one time, but bedbugs do travel. So if you're treating a bedroom, for instance, you might not have noticed they may have moved into your living room, and they may have moved into one of the adjacent bedrooms. It's very important to understand the biology, where they may be traveling, where they may be in hiding, and to understand the treatment that may be required.

For anyone who does find themselves in the unfortunate situation of having an infestation, it will require a significant amount of work on their part as well as the pest professional's part. It will require extensive laundering. I was talking with one person who is infested with bedbugs and she spent four solid days doing laundry. They had to wash every garment that was in her bedroom in hot water and put it in the dryer on a hot cycle. Then, they had to bag and seal in boxes every item that the bedbugs might have been in. It is necessary to eliminate clutter and to move that clutter so the rooms can be properly treated, because bedbugs and their eggs can be very sticky and they'll cling onto different things.

Have a story that bugs you? Bug us! Share your Bed Bug story, questions, or comments!

Stay tuned for part 2, where Missy will share more insights! Look for an email notification with the highlights for part 2. Thank you!

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