

Bed Bug Blog – Part 2 of 4

In Part 2, you'll discover: What you can do to help prevent a bed bug problem, How to spot a bed bug infestation, Preventative strategies when tenants come and go, Can bed bugs be isolated to one apartment?, Do they spread slower than roaches, faster, or about the same?, The methods used by a professional to get rid of the problem, What you can do to help prevent bed bugs from spreading in shared laundry rooms, How to tell if the problem is localized or spreading through adjacent units

PART 2

How can an apartment owner or property manager prevent a bedbug problem? Is there anything they can do?

A couple of things we would recommend that they consider. First of all is education, to make sure that the property managers do understand what bedbugs look like. The best thing I can say is they look like a small apple seed or a lentil. They're brown like those items, particularly with the adults. The babies are a little bit clearer. Particularly after they've been feeding, they do take on that darker color. You want to be on the lookout again for an apple seed-like bug or a lentil-like bug. Understand what to look for so that if there is concern about an infestation, you can jump on that problem immediately before it becomes a larger problem.

Another thing is to make sure that their tenants are educated so they understand the signs of an infestation. Again, what the bugs look like, how they will bite individuals, and what those bites look like. The bites that someone may find on their arms or their legs or anywhere they have been bitten will often occur in a line, and that would be evidence that the bug is walking up and down that area where they have bitten. It will look different than a mosquito bite which is oftentimes just a single bite mark. With the bedbugs, they will bite often in a line. The marks will also be incredibly itchy and the bites can swell up like welts, so make sure that people, if they do notice such a thing on any part of their skin, contact their property manager right away.

Also, set up preventative strategies working with a pest professional. Many companies and properties, as well as retail locations and other commercial locations, are now starting to set-up preventive practices with those pest managers to make sure that they are trying to monitor so if they do see anything, it can be jumped on at the first sign of a bedbug.

Can bedbugs be isolated to one apartment? Or are they like roaches in the sense that if one apartment has them, you can be almost a hundred percent sure that they're spreading, because you said they're travelers?

Yeah, good question. They can and do spread. If a bedbug is seen or an infestation is seen in one unit, the units that are right next to it on either side and above and below should immediately be checked as well. Then if those units have bedbugs, the inspection beyond those units would continue. Today, they do move up and down and around. So definitely, if one unit is affected, it's very wise to check on the ones next to and above and below.

Do they spread slower than roaches, faster, or about the same?

It depends. Bedbugs can live longer than roaches and they will have the opportunity to be reproducing during that time, but either way, you're talking about the potential of hundreds of babies coming from the originating parents. As I said earlier, I believe a female bedbug can produce up to 400 offspring. With cockroaches, they can reproduce 32 to 40 babies per egg case, and they can produce an egg case every 30 days. So anyway you're looking at it, you have the potential for hundreds of babies to be coming from the originating parents.

Can you take us through the most common approach on how a professional goes about getting rid of a bedbug problem in an apartment complex?

Sure, I'd be happy to. And one other thing I'd like to mention is the signs. We talked a little bit about seeing the bugs and what they look like. We talked about the bite patterns that may be on the arm or the leg or other bitten areas.

A couple of other things I should mention is how they may be eliminated. Also, there are other things to look for in addition to the bugs themselves; particularly around the mattress along the seams or under the dust ruffle.

You can also look for signs of many, many droplets of blood because those bedbugs are feeding on humans. I don't know if it's a bragging right or something to say, "Look at me, I've just eaten, but they do often leave little droplets of blood behind them when they have been feeding. So you can look for that on the bed covering.

You can also look for pepper-like flakes. Those would be the droppings of the bedbugs. So if a tenant does see those pepper-like patterns or little mini droplets of blood on or around their mattress area or their dust ruffle, those would be other signs of an infestation.

If the property manager or someone has called in the pest professional, there are a couple of things that they should be looking for. First of all, the professional would come and do a thorough inspection just to make sure that it is indeed bedbugs that they would be looking for. They would be able to do an inspection with a variety of different methods. Some use bedbug dogs for instance, where their noses are so much more sensitive and thorough than our human noses. They have proven very effective in identifying where infestations are located.

They can do a visual inspection using a UV lamp or enhancing glasses like a magnifying glass, making use of different kinds of enhancement glasses. So they'll be looking in special ways that could help determine if there are eggs, nymphs, adults, or even their cast skins or fecal matter. The advantage is that they have the ability to understand what they're looking for.

They can also use monitoring devices that would be set in place to determine if there is an infestation. If it has been determined that an infestation has been recognized, they would give the individual who has the infestation different steps that they would need to follow in order to properly prepare for that inspection.

I talked earlier about the laundry. That's definitely something that needs to be done. Everything in the room to be treated would need to be moved to the center of the room for proper treatment, and there would be several other items on that list as well.

The professional would determine what would be the most appropriate means of treating the identified area. It depends on if it's a localized infestation or if it's a broader infestation, they would use a variety of tools, again, depending on what made the most sense.

There really is no one size fits all way to treat. They would use a variety of things including heat. Bedbugs cannot withstand temperatures of greater than 113 degrees Fahrenheit, so they could use a localized heat treatment, or if it needs to be within the whole room, they would treat that room. They would warm that room up to a temperature of greater than 130 degrees for several hours. Or, they may use steam, or they may use freezing, or they may use properly applied products, or any combination of any of these items as well.

How do they know it's localized and it hasn't spread?

They understand the biology, so they would understand where to look for the infestation. They would use some of the different tools available to them, whether that's a bedbug dog, UV lamps, or the enhancement glasses to provide lighting that would showcase the eggs, the skins, or the fecal matter.

So maybe it would be considered localized if they were all in one place and there's absolutely no evidence of them being anywhere else?

Yeah. There are more things. They can do some general vacuuming and analyze the content for bedbugs if they're leaving. They can use the monitors. They would probably use passive monitors. We wouldn't want to do anything to attract bedbugs from another unit, for instance! They also can use different kinds of monitoring stations that can be set up, or active traps. As I said, they would want to use the passive monitors so they wouldn't be drawing them from other locations, and those would likely be sticky traps or climb up traps or something like that.

Have you had a bed bug infestation? Please share it with us!! Also, we invite your questions and comments.

Stay tuned for Part 3 where Missy shares these fascinating details:

- How dogs are helping in the fight against bed bugs
- The truth about the effectiveness of encased mattresses
- Is a mattress type better against bed bugs? Memory foam, sleep number, or spring?
- The bed bug bite - What does it really cause?
- The silver lining when it comes to bed bugs
- Bed bugs and hygiene
- Will they harm pets?

Posted by **Global Administrator** on 3/16/2011 7:40:00 AM