

## **Bed Bug Blog: Part 3 of 4**

**In part three of our interview series, we look at the use of dogs in the fight against bed bugs, shared laundry rooms, mattress types and impact, allergies or reactions, and bed bugs and pets.**

### **How often do they use dogs? Do they almost always use dogs or only rarely?**

No, I'd say it's somewhere in between. We are finding them used more and more, as bedbugs are becoming more prevalent because they are so difficult to treat and even to detect. We are finding that more companies are using dogs, and those companies that have used them are getting more dogs because they have proven to be so effective.

Dogs are trained for an extensive period of time. It's like dogs that are used by the police force to detect narcotics or bombs or whatever it may be. Those noses that the canines have are so incredibly accurate, so they're trained to detect the scent of the bedbugs or perhaps the babies as well by using different cues. The trainer is taught to work with the dog and they know how to react. They normally work six days a week or even seven. And if they're not working, they're constantly in training so that they don't in any way become immune to what they're supposed to be working to find.

### **How about shared laundry rooms in an apartment complex? Is there anything that an apartment owner or property manager can do to reduce the chance of bedbugs with an environment like a shared laundry room?**

We are finding that shared laundry rooms and Laundromats have been treated more often than they used to be over the past year for bedbugs. And that's because, again, if someone's house unit, condo, apartment, etc. has an infestation, bedbugs are on the move and they may be finding their way into the dirty laundry.

So we would recommend that anyone who is bringing laundry into a shared environment keep those garments in a sealed bag until they go right into the washer and then back into the dryer. And then, whoever is doing the laundry should put those items back in a sealed bag immediately. If there is an infestation coming in, this keeps them closed and isolated until they go right in that hot water temperature.

Also, if you hadn't had an infestation, this minimizes the likelihood of coming back with one. Any time you have those clothes that have been cleaned and dried in that hot water, put them in some kind of a sealable bag immediately so that you're not bringing an infestation into your home.

### **Are mattress and casings really effective against bedbug bites?**

They can be helpful in reducing a bedbug bite but you've got to get to the root of the problem. You can trap anything that may be in the mattress but if they are still wandering around in your room, it's a temporary solution. Let's minimize the ones that are within your bed, but unless you have properly eliminated all of the rest that may be lingering, it will be a temporary solution until they're completely gone from the area.

### **They'll still climb up on you and bite you, right?**

I'm not sure from the mattress encasement, but if they have been hiding in your picture frame that's next to your bed or what have you, then yes. Those obviously haven't been treated by the encasement so you have staved off attacks by those that were in the mattress, but if there are others that were beyond your bed, they will still come and find you.

### **So with the encasing, you take an existing mattress and then they encase it?**

Yes. They may be selling encased mattresses now, but normally, you would put them on the mattress that you've already purchased.

### **Does a memory foam type of mattress, or an air kind like a sleep by number kind of mattress help or does that not matter?**

I am not aware of any studies that evidence any kind of more prevalence or less prevalence of any type of mattress in particular. It's important to understand that even though the name is bedbug, they really could care less about the bed itself. It's the person that lays on top of it that their after, so I wouldn't imagine that there's any correlation to the type of the bed.

### **Are there any particular kinds of allergies that you know of that would make a tenant have a dangerous reaction to bedbugs?**

No. It's a good question on two levels and two things that I would say to that. Not everyone who is bitten by bedbugs will show that welt-like pattern of bites that I mentioned earlier, the swollen bite areas. Most people will, but not all people.

I was talking to someone recently and she said, "But I don't think we have bedbugs. My daughter and I show signs of it but my husband hasn't." I think she was really hoping I would say, "Oh you're fine." Unfortunately, when we taught her everything else, and she found brown lentil-like bugs in her bed, we had to determine that there was a problem - so not everyone will show signs.

I guess the good news here, if we can look for a silver lining, is that bedbugs do not transmit disease, so talking about a dangerous reaction means that some people will definitely swell up from the bites. It's been shown that bedbugs do not transmit disease. The biggest problems are the problems that you'll get from the welts and the discomfort factor there. It can really drive people to the brink of their sanity; so much so, in fact, that 99% of our professionals surveyed said that their customers were concerned about bedbugs, and 77% were very concerned about them. This is truly a pest that causes a great deal of mental anguish for those people that are affected.

We hear that people can't sleep. They're so worried about waking up in the morning with bites all over them that are tremendously itchy and uncomfortable. They're worried about their family and if there are bedbugs in one room, they're worried about their children or relatives that may be residing with them.

And so, when you can't sleep very well, all kinds of things start to enter your mind. They're worried if they're ever going to get rid of these things. It's this fear factor that develops for them. They're worried about the costs of eradicating the pests, and they worry about the stigma that may be associated with them as well. Is it appropriate to tell their friends? Or is it appropriate to say, "You can't come for dinner Friday night because we have bedbugs?" People are worried that if they have them they may not want to come over.

You know they're really worried about a variety of different things. We really want to make sure people understand that it's not a socioeconomic pest. It's not a hygiene-oriented pest. If you have bedbugs, you're in good company. People shouldn't try and sweep them under the rugs, so to speak. They really do need to bring in help immediately so that what may start out as something small doesn't turn into something big.

#### **Now, do they harm your pets?**

No. I think normally the preference, so to speak, is human blood. They have been known to feed on animals as well, but certainly again, not a health problem.

#### **Stay tuned for the final part in our interview series on bed bugs when we will discuss:**

- Can you tell if a tenant's previous apartment had a bed bug problem?
- Tenant screening for bed bugs
- Can you tell if there is a bed bug problem in your area?
- What about the banned treatment that was used years ago?
- Closing remarks from Missy

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