

PestGazette

SUMMER 2009

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Acrobat Ants

The acrobat ant is known as such, because when disturbed, a worker raises the tip of its abdomen up over its head and walks on its forelegs, thus appearing to do a traveling handstand.

Acrobat ants are small, shiny, have a brown to black color, as well as a very distinctive heart-shaped abdomen. You may see them trailing in your house or yard, or sometimes, if you have had a previous carpenter ant infestation, they will secondarily take over affected wood galleries or nest sites.

Acrobat ants may nest in rotting or water damaged wood. The presence of these ants in structures

is often indicative of a moisture problem related to a leak. Acrobat ants never attack sound wood and structural damage associated with them is minimal.

Some homeowners become alerted to an infestation when they see grayish bits of material (fine sawdust-like excrement and ant parts) being pushed out from under a floor joint or from behind a wall void. This is often mistaken for mouse damage and nesting. Call a pest professional if you suspect a problem — they will be able to establish the difference between mouse and acrobat ant damage. Treating for ants and treating for mice are two very different things! ■

Don't Bring Bed Bugs Home

Beware of bed bugs when you travel! These 10 tips can help reduce the risk of hungry hitch hikers.

- 1 When checking into a hotel, inspect your room thoroughly for bed bugs. Make sure to look closely for them (or their signs such as blood spots) in or behind the headboard of the bed, on or behind the picture hanging above the bed board, or in the seams of the mattress and box springs. (Bed bugs feed upon human blood at night and leave obvious stains behind.)
- 2 Inspect the valet stand or luggage rack thoroughly around the fabric seams to see that there are no bed bugs. After passing your inspection, place your suitcase on the stand and keep it there the entire visit; don't let the suitcase sit on the floor, bed, sofa or any other furniture in the room.
- 3 Move your bed away from the wall of the room, and do not let linens touch the floor.

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Call Today!
1-800-498-1166



Shoo, Fly! Don't Bother Me!



bronze blow fly



green blow fly

No summer picnic would be complete without hamburgers, hot dogs and ... blow flies. They are regular (unwanted) guests at warm weather cookouts, especially when meat is on the menu.

Blow flies are a diverse group of flies ranging in size from 1/4 – 1/2 inch in length, and generally have a *metallic sheen* to their bodies. They may be black, blue, coppery green, olive green, or bronze in color. All adult blow flies have blunt mouthparts and do not bite.

Blow fly larva, called maggots, feed on dead and decaying organic matter and help to break it down. In addition to meats and flesh, they often infest wounds of sheep, deer, cattle, and other animals. But, they can also be attracted to nectar, carrion, garbage, and other refuse. Blow flies deposit eggs in wounds or on dead carcasses. The fly larvae which soon hatch feed on decaying flesh or matted hair. As a rule, blow fly larvae never attack healthy tissues.

As disgusting as all of this may sound, blow flies actually serve several useful purposes. In nature, they help to facilitate decomposition, and are often the first to arrive at a crime scene. If you've watched a primetime police drama in the last 10 years, you probably already know that blow flies have been successfully used by law enforcement to solve crimes. By using the fly's development along with climatologic data, police can determine the timeline of a crime. Blow fly maggots have also

been used successfully in medicine to clean out necrotic tissues of patients.

However useful, most people do not want to see blow flies in their homes! If you see blow flies in your home, it usually means that there is an animal carcass nearby. Most likely, a mouse, rat, squirrel, bird or some other type of urban wildlife has died within your structure. Perhaps, underneath your home in a crawl space, behind a wall void or in an attic space, blow flies are traveling to the carcass to break it down.

We are experts at eliminating blow flies *and* the urban wildlife and rodent pests which can attract them. Be sure to call us at the first sign of flies in your home! ■

Bed Bugs (continued from page 1)



- 4 Check the hangers and rack in the closet before hanging your clothes there.
- 5 Check nightstands and dresser drawers before placing personal items on or in these pieces of furniture.
- 6 If you should find bed bugs present immediately alert the hotel management that this is the case, and that you would like to be moved to another room. (*Only by informing the management of the bed bugs can they begin to tackle their problem. Hotels are now very aware of this issue and will work with you to make and keep your stay pleasant.*)
- 7 While waiting for transportation to the airport check the upholstery of the lobby seats for signs of bed bugs.
- 8 When on your plane or train heading home, check the seat, and any pillows or blankets handed to you for signs of bed bugs.
- 9 When you return home, unload your suitcase in the garage or out on the porch or patio. Make sure to inspect your luggage thoroughly (inside and out) for any signs of bed bug hitchhikers that may have come home with you.
- 10 If you should accidentally bring bed bugs home with you, **contact us immediately** to help rid your home of them. The sooner you make that call, the sooner your bed bugs will be gone. Early detection is key — infestations are much easier to tackle at the early end, before things get out of hand! ■



Mosquitoes

Every summer there are new horror stories about mosquito-borne illnesses such as equine encephalitis, malaria and West Nile virus. But there are steps you can take to help keep mosquitoes at bay near your home this summer. Mosquitoes require an aquatic habitat for the egg, larval and pupal forms of their development to occur. By simply removing water resources in which mosquitoes may develop, you can help make your yard and neighborhood mosquito-free. Here are 15 ways to help keep mosquitoes away from your home:

- 1 Don't overwater your yard and garden. Standing water becomes a source for mosquito eggs to be deposited and to develop.
- 2 Empty bird baths at least once a week and replenish water.
- 3 Remove standing water from potted plant saucers.
- 4 Change pet dish water once a week.
- 5 Change water in kiddie pools or fountains at least once a week.
- 6 Make sure trash can lids are on cans and not turned over to serve as water reservoirs.
- 7 Clean gutters on house and make sure water is flowing properly away from home.
- 8 Fill in mud puddles.
- 9 Grade land so water moves away from the house and yard.
- 10 Check tree holes and stumps in yard for standing water.
- 11 Make sure tire swings and any old tires are emptied of standing water in the yard.
- 12 Rain barrels for catching rainwater should be screened at the surface to prevent mosquitoes from laying eggs.
- 13 Cover all trash and recycle receptacles with tight-fitting lids to prevent water inside.
- 14 Add bubblers or fountains to small decorative lakes or fish ponds to keep the water surface constantly rippling so that mosquito larvae are drowned at the surface.
- 15 Keep swimming pools drained or covered during off months, and treated properly during the summer season. ■



Tree Squirrels

What's that noise in the attic? It sounds like something's racing around up there! If you're losing sleep listening to scratching and running noises in your attic, it's most likely because tree squirrels have moved in. In urban and suburban areas, tree squirrels are difficult to control because of their great mobility and because people often encourage their presence by feeding them or providing nest boxes. It is relatively easy to keep squirrels out of buildings, but keeping them out of a yard, garden or home can be challenging.

The detection of tree squirrels is fairly easy. They are active during daylight hours and are highly visible. They are acrobatic climbers and have excellent jumping abilities. Anything you can do to make your garden less attractive to squirrels is helpful. Trees that overhang roofs or that are close to telephone lines should be cut back to slow their movement around your yard. If you have birdfeeders in your yard, there are devices available to physically keep squirrels out of them.

Because they often travel on overhead telephone lines, power lines, and fence tops, they frequently find entrances at these heights. Even a small opening in the rafters can work, as squirrels can enlarge the holes by gnawing. In the absence of an obvious entrance, they will gnaw a hole to get into an attic.

Call on us to close those entry routes, because you never want to screen an animal inside a home or building, or separate a mom for her young. Sheet metal or 1/4-inch wire hardware cloth is suitable material for closing entrances. We can use screening to block all potential entrance sites such as small gaps under the eaves, overlapping roof sections, and knotholes, and can prevent tree squirrel access to buildings. One way to test whether any squirrels are left in the attic is to plug the entrance with a loose wad of newspaper; if any squirrels remain inside, they will remove the plug to get out. ■



Even a small opening in the rafters is enough for a squirrel to gain entrance into an attic; they will simply enlarge the holes by gnawing.



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