

Pest Gazette



Ticks and Lyme Disease

Bed bugs aren't the only blood sucking pest to watch out for this summer, ticks are out for blood too. And unlike bed bugs, ticks can transmit pathogens that cause multiple diseases including Lyme disease, the most common arthropod-borne disease in North America. Lyme disease is transmitted by the blacklegged tick in the Eastern United and upper Midwestern United States and by the western blacklegged tick on the Pacific coast.

Here are some tips from the Centers for Disease Control that you can use to protect yourself and your family from ticks during the summer months:

- Avoid areas that ticks prefer like wooded and bushy locations with high grass and a lot of leaf litter.
- Take extra precautions in May, June, and July. This is when ticks that transmit Lyme disease are most active.
- If you do enter a tick area, walk in the center of the trail to avoid contact with overgrown grass, brush, and leaf litter.



Lyme disease is the most common arthropod-borne disease in North America.

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Daddy Long-legs: The Spider That Isn't

Question: When is a spider not really a spider?

Answer: When it is a harvestman.



Harvestmen, sometimes known as daddy long-legs, are arachnids and are related to spiders, but they are different in some critical ways. Like spiders, harvestmen have eight legs, but if you look closely, harvestmen only have one body section, spiders always have two. In addition to body structure, harvestmen differ from spiders by lacking fangs and venom, two items that spiders always possess. Unlike many spiders, harvestmen don't spin webs to capture prey. They don't have the ability to produce silk and typically catch their prey by surprise or by scavenging it.

Harvestmen are harmless to humans and can even be considered beneficial (albeit somewhat creepy) because some species feed on small insects and other invertebrates, while others are scavengers that will eat just about anything. They are most common in damp shady areas such as forests but they are often encountered around houses, hiding along foundation walls and under siding.

To reduce the likelihood of encountering harvestmen around your home, try to eliminate harborage areas (places harvestmen like to rest or hide), by keeping grass and weeds cut short around foundation walls, removing debris and leaf litter and keeping piles of firewood stored away from buildings. ■



Ticks (continued from page 1)

- Use insect repellent with DEET on exposed skin and clothing to prevent tick bites. Effective repellents can be found in drug, grocery and discount stores.
- Wear long pants, long sleeves, and long socks to keep ticks off your skin. Light-colored clothing will help you spot ticks more easily. Tucking pant legs into socks or boots and tucking shirts into pants help keep ticks on the outside of clothing. If you'll be outside for an extended period of time, tape the area where your pants and socks meet to prevent ticks from crawling under your clothes.
- Take a shower as soon as you can after coming indoors.
- Remove ticks from your clothes before going indoors.
- Perform daily tick checks after being outdoors, even in your own yard. Inspect all parts of your body carefully.
- If you are bitten by a tick and experience a rash or fever, contact your physician.

Ticks prefer to live in brushy or wooded areas and rarely venture into well manicured lawns. Pest management professionals can perform treatments to the "edge" areas between your lawn and the natural areas surrounding your property. Contact us today to find out how we can help protect your family from ticks. ■

Don't Pick Up (Bed Bug) Hitchhikers This Summer

One of the reasons that bed bugs have spread so quickly throughout the United States is their uncanny ability to “hitchhike” on humans and our belongings. When a bed bug bites, it typically feeds for 8-10 minutes then leaves the host to return to its hiding place to rest until its next blood meal. Typically these hiding places are cracks, crevices or seams in beds, bed frames or furniture, but they could also include backpacks, purses, or suitcases. To keep bed bugs from hitchhiking home with you this summer, follow these simple tips.

When traveling, carefully inspect your hotel room for the tell-tale signs of bed bugs. Look carefully at the mattress for bed bugs, eggs, shed skins and bed bug fecal stains (small dark spots). Be sure to inspect seams, buttons and tags, bed bugs like to hide in these areas. Use a flashlight to inspect the headboard, bed frame and furniture for bedbug evidence as well. Focus your inspection on cracks and crevices where bed bugs might be hiding.

Keep in mind that bed bugs can be found in many places other than hotel rooms. Bed bugs have been found in trains, buses, planes, and movie theaters (just to name a few). Populations can become established anywhere that people spend time resting for long periods of time. That includes the rental home by the lake and the cozy bed and breakfast you booked for the weekend too. Not to mention the fact that your houseguests might even bring an infestation to you.

Early detection is extremely helpful in the fight against bed bugs. Carefully inspecting luggage after returning from a trip can help you detect bed bug hitchhikers before they enter the home. It is also a good practice to wash and dry all clothing immediately upon removing them from the suitcase upon arriving home (regardless of whether or not they were worn) since the high heat setting on clothes dryers will kill all bed bug life stages, including the eggs. When houseguests leave, inspect and carefully clean the guestroom and wash and dry all bed linens on guest beds.

Careful inspection and early detection is the key to reducing the risk of picking up unwanted hitchhikers this summer. But even the best bed bug inspectors can miss the lone bed bug nymph or egg that has stowed away in your luggage. If you find evidence of bed bugs or need help identifying a pest, we are just a phone call away! ■



Bed bugs can hitchhike home with you in a suitcase, clothing, purse or backpack.





Protect your family (and your picnics) this summer. Follow these tips to help reduce the number of yellow jackets in your yard:

Cover food to reduce its attractiveness.

Use garbage cans with tight fitting lids to keep yellow jackets out.

Keep drinks covered to avoid a surprise sting to the lip or mouth by a yellow jacket that has climbed inside.

Rinse out bottles and cans before tossing them into outside recycling bins. Sodas and juices make an attractive food source for yellow jackets.



Unwanted Guests: Yellow Jackets

Have you ever noticed how yellow jackets seem to get worse as the summer progresses? Ever wonder why your Memorial Day picnic rarely has yellow jackets buzzing around, but by the time the Labor Day barbeque arrives, your back yard is swarming with these stinging insects? Your observations are correct. In most temperate climates, yellow jackets overwinter as mated queens. That means that as cool weather approaches toward the end of autumn, male yellow jackets are produced, which mate with potential queens. These mated queens seek sheltered places to hibernate (the males die) during the cold winter months. These hibernation spots might include inside buildings, side hollow trees or logs, or other sheltered areas. As the weather cools, the original queens die and the colony collapses. When spring arrives, brand new colonies are founded by these overwintered queens. That's one of the reasons that we see fewer yellow jackets in the spring and early summer, the colonies are simply smaller. As the colonies (rapidly) grow during the season, so do the numbers of yellow jackets buzzing around

your picnic blanket, and by the end of the summer, yellow jacket colonies can be quite large.

Colony size is not the only reason that yellow jackets are more of a nuisance later in the summer. During the rapid population growth of a juvenile colony, large amounts of protein-based food is required to feed the developing larvae. The protein needed to feed the colony comes in the form of insect prey. It turns out that yellow jackets are excellent hunters, providing an excellent benefit to humans by eating caterpillars and other insects. It isn't until the population growth begins to level off mid-summer that yellow jackets become interested in carbohydrates and other sugary foods that are often found at backyard parties.

By understanding why yellow jackets become a greater nuisance toward the end of the summer, we can take precautions against these stinging pests. ■

