

Pests of the Month



Mice



Cockroaches

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Mice
- 1 Cockroaches
- 2 INSECTeresting Facts on Cockroaches
- 2 Reducing Pesticide Exposure at Schools



Few bugs are bad! More than 95% of all insect species are beneficial to humans.

Mice The house mouse is the most common rodent infesting schools today. You can find them wherever people are present since they prefer a life of living in human shelters and stealing human food.

The deer mouse is a less invasive species than the house mouse. However, it “is the most widely distributed and abundant mammal in North America. It currently is the primary reservoir of Hantavirus”. Normally the deer mouse invades outbuildings and is distinguished from the house mouse by the “sharp contrast in color between the back and belly, the white feet and the furry tail” (Corrigan, 2001).

Mice may infest schools year round but are more likely to show up during cold weather months seeking the warmth and food of human structures rather than living outside.

Once mice have gained entrance, they can do serious damage by contaminating food and gnawing at materials. Also, the house mouse may carry disease which can be transmitted to people and domestic animals.

Evidence of mice (other than sighting the animal itself) includes damage to food containers, nesting materials, and the small, tapered fecal pellets left in areas where the mouse feeds or is harbored – **CLUTTERED AREAS!** Every school has their fair share of “clutter bugs”, no not insects but teachers and members of staff who “have too much STUFF” to allow good sanitation standards to be maintained.

Keep mice out of schools and homes by:

- 1) Repairing or caulking all openings that allow entrance.
- 2) Removing indoor and outdoor debris that could harbor mice such as woodpiles, clutter, and mulch piles.
- 3) Clearing high weeds – since weeds and seeds serve as food and shelter for mice during warm weather.
- 4) Cleaning up food scraps and storing foods to prevent easy access to food. All pet foods and bird seed stored in the school should be stored off the floor and in mouse-proof containers.

Control: We recommend mechanical traps to control light to moderate infestations of mice. Snakes are our friends and limit mouse populations.

Cockroaches There are thousands of species of cockroaches in the world. However, only very few are problems in schools. These include the German, American, Oriental, brownbanded, and smokybrown.

Cockroaches or “water bugs” as some people call them can cause many problems. Certain cockroaches carry germs that cause human diseases such as diarrhea, dysentery, food poisoning, and salmonella. The transmission of these diseases can be caused by the roaches’ habit of wandering through organic wastes and then traveling over countertops, cooking utensils, food, plates, and silverware.

Another major problem caused by roaches is **allergies**. A roach allergen causes the allergic response and can be ingested with contaminated food or inhaled when dried fecal particles and fragments of ground up bodies of dead roaches are mixed together with dust. Severe bronchial problems in sensitive individuals and children may be triggered by these roach allergens. This problem is a serious one and should not be taken lightly.

Prevention is the best way to address cockroach problems. Tactics include preventing entry, using good sanitation practices, sealing cracks and crevices, storing food in air-tight containers, and tightly covering trash bins.

If following a strict policy of cleaning isn’t enough to avoid attracting roaches, you may have a problem with hitchhiking roaches. Roaches can hide in cardboard boxes, a sack of potatoes and basically anything they can ride to gain entry into a building. Adult roaches have the ability to squeeze into places the thickness of a quarter.

It is critical that pest vulnerable areas (PVAs) such as kitchens, pantries, teacher lounges, custodial closets, booster concession areas, biology and home economics classroom be monitored for the potential infestation of roaches using monitoring traps.

Only once infestations are identified and located should pesticides (normally baits) be applied by the schools’ IPM expert.

Information prepared by Jennifer Snyder and Dawn Gouge, Univ. of AZ and taken from:

Pest Press – Marc Lame, Indiana University
“Rodent Control: A Practical Guide for Pest Management Professionals” – Dr. Bobby Corrigan
University of Florida Entomology and Nematology Department’s School IPM website (<http://ifas.ufl.edu>)

Reducing Pesticide Exposure at Schools

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) released a new document that recommends reducing pesticide exposures at school through the implementation of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program. The for page fact sheet provides information on the risks

related to pesticide exposure, recommendations for reducing exposure, and information about IPM.

The fact sheet begins with a brief discussion on the risks related to pesticide exposure, citing “children may be particularly susceptible to pesticide toxicity because their organ systems have not reached their full developmental maturity.” It goes on to say that, “Exposure to pesticides can produce cough, shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting, headaches, and eye irritation”. There is also mounting evidence that long-term pesticide exposure in adults is associated with chronic health effects such as cancer, neurologic problems, and reproductive problems.”

The main focus of the publication is on the implementation of an IPM program. They described an IPM program as “an alternative pest control technique that manages and suppresses pests by preventing their access to food, water and shelter” and does not “rely on the regular use of chemicals.”

NIOSH recommends that the following steps be a part of a schools IPM policy and procedural guidelines:

1. Appoint a pest manager;
2. Monitor for pest problems;
3. Identify the origin of any pest problems;
4. Eliminate the source(s) of problems without the use of pesticides;
5. If nontoxic methods or impractical, use the least toxic pesticide that minimizes exposure;
6. Keep records and evaluate effectiveness of current IPM program;
7. Notify and provide reentry recommendations when pesticides are used.

For a copy of the fact sheet, see:
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2007-150>

INSECTeresting Facts on Cockroaches

- A cockroach can live up to a week without its head.
- Cockroaches can run 3 miles in one hour.
- Female cockroaches mate once and are pregnant for the rest of their lives.
- Cockroaches have at least 18 knees.
- Cockroaches can go a month with no food, but only a week without water.
- Cockroaches can swim and hold their breath for 40 minutes.
- There are over 5,000 species of cockroaches worldwide.

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