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The Pest Bulletin

Biting & Stinging Pests of Summer

Biting and stinging pests are out in force this summer. While some of these pests' stings are "just" painful or itching, others can be downright dangerous to us and our pets.

Biting pests see us as "fast food". Most are very efficient at sucking out our blood, including mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, lice, bed bugs, chiggers, biting flies and no-see-ums. While we won't miss the loss of blood, it's the diseases these insects sometimes transmit directly into our blood stream (everything from West Nile virus to Lyme disease), plus their itching bites,



that cause more serious problems. The bites cause itching because our bodies have a local allergic reaction to the saliva and other chemicals these pests inject into us as they suck out our blood.

Stinging pests, including bees, wasps, and certain ants, usually sting because they perceive us as a threat to themselves or their colony. Most of these pests inflict a lot of pain—it's their way of saying, "Leave us alone, or else..." And "**OUCH**", we get the

message instantly!

But these pests can deliver much more than just a painful sting. The real danger is a mass attack—being stung over 200 times. This can be fatal, although some victims with over 1,000 bee stings have survived with proper medical treatment. And for the over 1% of our population that is hypersensitive to their stings, just one sting, if it is not treated quickly, can be deadly.

Also watch this summer for stings from spiders, centipedes, and scorpions!

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Kids are out of school! If you look at where they've been, you may find that they are leaving a trail of sweetened juice and single-serving containers, and other foods that attract ants and other pests. Take time for clean-up!

Spiders, Spiders Everywhere!

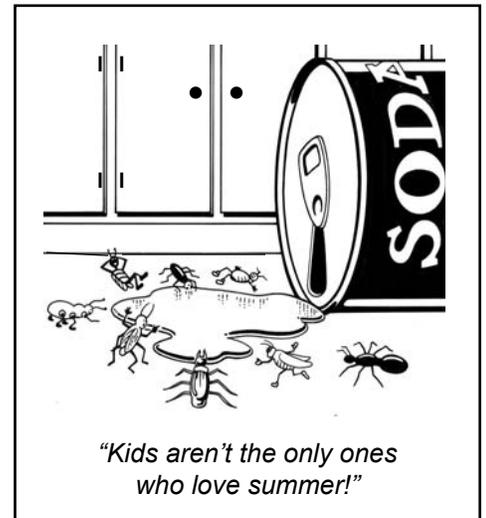
Biologists consider spiders beneficial insects because they eat other insects. However, most people would rather not have them around their home or business, with very good reason. Their webs are creepy and annoying, they leave stains and piles of insect carcasses below them, and a few species can inflict a nasty bite. Besides these facts, many people have some degree of "*arachnophobia*", or fear of spiders.

Fortunately most spiders don't want to bite us—they want to avoid us. And the vast majority of spiders don't even have strong enough mouthparts to penetrate our skin. But it's still wise to have a healthy respect for them, unless you are an expert and can distinguish the many different kinds of spiders.



a good idea to remove debris and trim weeds and heavy shrubbery around the outside of your home where spiders can hide and breed. Also, outside use lower wattage lights, yellow lights, or sodium vapor lights, so you won't attract as many night-flying insects that provide food for spiders. You can also shield outdoor lights so they don't attract insects from far away.

Our treatments for spiders around the perimeter of your home or business are very effective in killing them. This is not a one-time treatment, because new spiders are hatching all the time from spider egg sacs, and these tend to "balloon" through the air from nearby areas, reinfesting previously treated sites.



Insects in Baggage Mean Trouble



Traveling is easy, especially if you're a Mediterranean fruit fly. Just hop a plane and enter the U.S. with no problem!

A recent study found that airport baggage inspectors, searching for alien insects, may not be preventing the entry of most pests. It seems that although thousands of interceptions of alien pests are made each year, only a small percentage of baggage is checked carefully.

The study found that the Mediterranean fruit fly, which can be devastating to certain crops especially in Florida and California, is arriving in a steady stream at all U.S. airports. This explains the frequent reappearance of the pest, despite rigorous efforts to eliminate it.

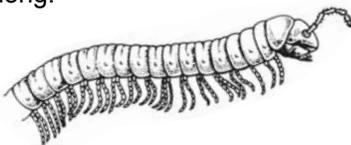


Remember, if you travel this summer, NEVER bring back fruits or other plant parts because they may contain serious pests that only a trained eye can detect.

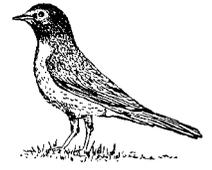
Rare Leggiest Creature Rediscovered

Millipedes have more legs than any creature on earth—some millipedes have as many as 300 legs. But there is one millipede that "outlegs" them all. The female *Illacme plenipes* has a mind-boggling 750 legs! This elusive millipede was discovered in 1926 but hadn't been seen since. That's why scientists became so excited recently when they announced finding more of these creatures for the first time in 80 years, in San Benito County, California, about 95 miles south of San Francisco.

Little is known about this species, but females have more legs than males, and they apparently continue to add more body segments, each with two pairs of legs, throughout their life. The females found were only 1.3 inches long; males were 0.6 inches long.



Robins a Key to West Nile



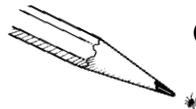
You may feel like mosquitoes adore you, but be thankful you're not a poor robin. Mosquitoes love to feed on robin blood, and it's now becoming clear that robins, not birds like crows and house sparrows, form the biggest reservoir of West Nile virus.

Since its North American debut in 1999, West Nile virus has killed 800 people and sickened an estimated 225,000 more. Fortunately most human cases have been mild. Mosquitoes become infective when they feed on an infected bird or other animal. They then begin transmitting the virus with each feeding.

Researchers at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station have reported that robin blood accounts for more than 33% of the meals for two kinds of mosquitoes that transmit West Nile virus. Considering the thousands of birds and animals mosquitoes feed on, this amount of blood is a surprisingly high percentage to be coming from just one kind of bird.

Other researchers, studying at sites in Washington, D.C., and Maryland, have found robin blood accounted for even more mosquito meals—43%. These studies indicate that robins are the preferred blood meal for mosquitoes that transmit West Nile virus.

Robins migrate and head south in late summer, leaving mosquitoes without their preferred hosts. They then begin turning more to humans for their blood meals. This may explain the spike in human West Nile virus cases in late summer and early fall.



Guinea Fowl Ineffective for Lyme Disease Control

Helmeted guinea fowl have a reputation as a biological control agent for Lyme disease because they seek out and eat ticks. But recent tests have shown these birds eat mainly *adult ticks*, which only rarely transmit Lyme disease to humans, rather than the smaller *nymphal ticks*, which are the main transmitters. In the tests, guinea fowl were allowed to roam free on tick-infested sites in southeastern New York state. After one year adult tick populations in forested areas were reduced, but nymphal ticks were not. Neither kind of tick was reduced in grass areas and along forest/grass boundaries. The researchers conclude that guinea fowl are unlikely to make an area safer for people and pets.

Chewing Rat Interrupts 'American Idol'



A rat chewing through power equipment doesn't often make the news, but interrupting the "American Idol" semifinals is another story! Just as the show was beginning, the rat shorted out the 12,000 volt equipment at a substation in Riverside, California, cutting off power for about 9,500 residents. Workers eventually found the surprised rat, or what was left of him. It had gnawed through two barriers before making it to the live wires. Rodents are gnawers by nature, and can cause considerable damage—and distress—as they gnaw through materials.