



PEST PRO

P.O. Box 1514 • White Plains, NY 10602

(914) 761-4844

website: www.pestpro.us

e-mail: fcpestpro@aol.com

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The Pest Bulletin

It's Move-In Time for Rats & Mice

In the fall and early winter mice and rats invade homes in record numbers, looking for food and a more comfortable place to spend the winter. The question many people ask us is, "How do rats and mice get in?" The short answer is, "Very easily!"



Openings around service conduits like water, electricity, and phone lines, provide easy access indoors and between apartments. Dryer vents and gaps around window-installed air conditioner units are other common entry points. Rodents can also crawl up through drain pipes not properly capped, as well as under garage doors.

Rats reach roof areas easily by "tight-rope walking" along utility lines and tree branches, by climbing up pipes, and even through gutter down-

spouts. This enables them to enter through cracks, roof and chimney vents, and around fireplace flashing.

Surprisingly, rodents sometimes are inadvertently brought indoors hidden in bags, boxes, and used appliances or furniture. And they sometimes scurry in through an open door or unscreened window.

Persistent rodents find many ways to get indoors. If you have these all-too-common pests, give us a call to professionally control them.

Rats and mice have an amazing ability to squeeze through small holes. A young mouse can easily squeeze through a hole even smaller than a dime; a young rat can squeeze through a hole smaller than a quarter. And if the hole is too small, they simply make it bigger by gnawing around the edges.



Late Fall/Winter Pests

Just when you might think pests have departed for the year, a huge new group of them emerges: the notorious *late fall & winter problem pests*.

As you pull out woolen clothes from storage, there may be holes in them you didn't see before. Clothes moths and carpet beetles attack woolen clothes, rugs, and other materials, especially in little-disturbed areas.

If you bring a Christmas tree indoors, you're also bringing in a number of "bugs" that live in the tree. Some of these may have been in partial dormancy because of the cold outside. When they are brought into a warm room they become active again and start crawling and flying about. Pests may also come out of holiday plants, wreaths, decorative pinecones, leaves, and berries, and firewood.

Pantry pests have been multiplying in homes all summer, and will continue during winter to thrive in **kitchens**, and wherever human or pet food is stored. If you see moths or beetles, they may be coming from stored food, spices, and other items.

Other **household** pests, like rats, mice, and many fall-invading insects, become a special problem in the fall and winter because they are looking for warmer, drier winter quarters. Of course, some pests are problems all year, including ants, silverfish, and cockroaches. And bed bugs, now being called "*The Pests of the 21st Century*", are unfortunately becoming more common around the country. These nasty **bedroom** blood-suckers haven't been a serious problem for over half a century, and because of various factors, they're back again, and out for blood!

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Before you bring any potted plants indoors, whether they are from your yard or a store, inspect them, including under the containers, for pests. Also, hose off Christmas trees with a strong jet of water before you bring them indoors, to help remove pests.



Listen honey, there's a waiting list a mile long for that hole-in-the-wall!

Africanized Bees Kill Man



In September a father, 62, and his 39 year old son were stung by bees outside their home in Sierra Vista, Arizona. The father rushed inside and showered to get the bees off, while the son stayed outside and used a garden hose "to battle the bees". When his family went outside to help, they found the son "lying on the ground completely surrounded by thousands and thousands of swarming bees." If anyone tried to get close, the bees would attack them.

The bees were later identified as Africanized honey bees. A local pest control company removed the hive, which was underneath the mobile home and contained about a quarter million bees. One bee sting can be fatal to a highly allergic person, but for most people, a 150 pound person can tolerate about 100 bee stings. The father had been stung about 100 times and he suffered no serious aftereffects; the son died; he had received about 300 stings.

WHAT TO DO: The best way to escape an attack by Africanized bees is to cover your head with your shirt or a cloth, because these bees tend to target the eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Then run inside a building or car. If you can't get inside, run in a zigzag pattern until they disperse; they usually won't follow for more than a quarter mile.

Africanized honey bees are spreading and are now established in parts of south Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, southern Nevada, Utah, and Florida, and have been found in Louisiana and Arkansas as well.



Did You Know?



* **Asian cockroaches** are spreading. Natives of Japan and first discovered in Florida in 1986, they now have infested much of central and south Florida, as well as parts of Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina. Recently they have also been found in Houston. Asian cockroaches look very similar to common German cockroaches, but they act differently. They live both indoors and outdoors, and they can fly, and are often attracted to bright lights.

* **A new mouse** has been discovered on the island of Cyprus. Named the Cypriot mouse, it is the first new terrestrial mammal found in Europe in decades. The mouse looks very similar to our common house mouse, but has a slightly larger head, ears, eyes, teeth and tail.

* **Here's a little chuckle for you:** What do you get when you cross a praying mantis with a termite? An insect that says grace before it eats your home!

Animal Speed Record Set

A species of "trap-jaw ant" from Costa Rica has just become the world speed record holder for animal movement. These ants can snap their jaws together at amazing speeds of up to 145 mph—more than *2,000 times faster* than the blink of a human eye. It is so fast, that the ants can use it to strike an object, which actually propels their entire bodies backwards, away from predators and other dangers, as far as 15 inches. They can do this in less than a *thousandth of a second*—even faster than an attacking lizard's tongue.



Tarantula-Gazing Causes Bicycle Accident

A man who was looking at tarantulas at the side of a mountain road was inadvertently the cause of a serious bike accident when a cyclist suddenly slowed to see what the nature-lover was looking at. Unfortunately, the cyclist's wife was tailing her husband closely, and collided with him. The cyclists were knocked unconscious; both fortunately were wearing helmets.

Fall is tarantula mating season—a time when male tarantulas come out of their burrows and wander about, hunting for female tarantulas to mate with. The males reach sexual maturity after seven years, then go out looking for females, and die shortly afterwards, or in rare cases, are eaten by their mates.

At Mount Diablo State Park in California, where the accident occurred, these spiders are big (up to 4 inches long), ugly, and tend to take the path of least resistance, which means they often crawl along trails and roadways, making them common sightings.

Thank You!

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank both our long-term customers, and those who just joined us this year. We appreciate the opportunity to serve you, and the confidence you place in us. We also want to especially say "Thank you!" to those of you who have referred new customers to us this year. We wish each and every one of you happiness and success during the coming year!