



Bed Bugs; Coming to a Condo Near You!

By Doug Longfellow, *President NaturZone Pest Control*

According to the New York Times bed bug infestations have reached epidemic proportions in condos and co-ops in the city. While infestations levels have not (and most likely will not) reach these proportions in our area, hardly a week goes by that we don't read something about bed bugs in the press.

Smart property managers need to be prepared on how to deal with this very sensitive issue. Here is what you need to know:

What are bed bugs and what do they look like? Bed bugs are small reddish brown, oval, non-flying insects with flat bodies that resemble ticks or small cockroaches. Bed bugs must have a host such as humans or animals to survive and normally live near where the host sleeps. If you suspect your community has a bed bug issue, contact a reputable pest management professional to get a positive identification. With all the press about bed bugs we have had numerous complaints from what people believe to be bed bugs that turn out to be a false alarm.

Bed bugs are hitchhikers: Bed bugs do not live outdoors; they live inside close to their host. They are spread by hitchhiking on humans (and luggage) to a new location where they lay their eggs and seek out a host. With the trend of increased rental units in condominium communities a greater number of people are visiting the community and increasing the odds that one of them is carrying bed bugs.

Do bed bugs carry disease? Nope, bed bug bites won't make you sick (unless, of course, the bites get infected). The World Health Organization conducted research in Africa which produced no documentation that they can transmit disease.

Bed bugs biology: Bed bugs are nocturnal insects and lead a very cryptic lifestyle. Unless there is a severe infestation they are rarely seen during the day. They live in cracks and crevices associated with bed frames, head boards, mattresses and box springs. They also will disperse away from the bed and can live between or beneath floorboards, carpeting, under decorative moldings, in furniture, behind picture frames, inside wall voids, etc. There is virtually no crack too small for this insect to occupy. It is from these secluded cracks and crevices that the bugs emerge during the nighttime hours to feed on their sleeping host. The bites are typically painless and may go undetected. As a result, bed bugs are often present for weeks or even months before a single bug is ever seen by the occupants. Because of their secretive nature combined with a high reproductive rate it is not unusual to have a full blown infestation before the owner recognizes the problem.

We have bed bug! What do I do? First and foremost contact an experienced bed bug pest control professional. Bed bug treatments are tough even for experienced professionals; you do not want to handle this situation on your own. Your pest professional should conduct a thorough inspection of the affected unit and surrounding units, present a written treatment plan, owners' preparation requirements, treatment price and warranty. Because bed bugs can infest every crack and crevice in the infested units, a lot of prep work will be required by the unit owner, and extremely thorough

(possible multiple) treatments from the pest control company. You can also expect that the treatments will not be cheap. Treatment options include chemicals, steam, heat remediation, freezing and fumigation. No one treatment option is right, as the choice depends on a number of environmental conditions. Most of our treatments consist of either chemical treatments or heat remediation. I favor heat remediation as the problem is gone in one day and items like mattresses and furniture that potentially would have to be disposed of can be saved.

Can bed bugs be prevented? While there is no sure way to guarantee prevention, there are steps that can be taken such as inspection and preventive treatments to lessen the chances of infestation by your pest management professional.

The author is Doug Longfellow, President NaturZone Pest Control is, a 30 year veteran of the pest control industry. He was President of the USA division of the world largest pest control company before purchasing NaturZone in 2004. NaturZone Pest Control was founded in 1988 and specializes in providing green pest control solutions to condominiums and other commercial clients. Our areas of coverage are Charlotte, Desoto, Sarasota, Manatee, Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties. For more information email the author at Doug@naturzone.com Call Toll Free: (866) 390- PEST (7378), www.NaturZone.com



Bed bug on a hand



Close up of bed bug on human



Bed Bug on head of a phillips head screw driver