



BED BUGS

(Cimex lectularius)

APPEARANCE

Bed bugs are oval flattened insects, 4-5 mm in length which are pale brown in colour when unfed and after feeding become much darker brown. They have a short broad head and oval flattened body. The head houses a pair of compound eyes and prominent antennae.

The bed bug is wingless but has three pairs of well developed legs enabling it to move quite quickly.

LIFE CYCLE

The bed bug lives in a human environment throughout its life cycle. It reproduces itself through a process termed incomplete metamorphosis. After mating has taken place the female lays two or three eggs per day for life. As a bed bug could live for several months hundreds of eggs can result. These eggs are laid in cracks and crevices in bedding, skirting boards, and behind peeling wallpaper etc.



The eggs are approximately 1mm long, yellowish white in colour and vase shaped. The eggs hatch after about 10 days at normal room temperature of about 20°C, although at constant temperatures of 25°C they hatch in about 7 days. At temperatures lower than 20°C hatching time is lengthened and at temperatures below 14°C eggs will not hatch. After hatching the young take 5 nymphal stages to the adult stage in about six weeks.

FEEDING HABITS

Bed bugs feed exclusively on blood. Human blood is preferred but when not available the blood from rodents, bats, and birds is acceptable. Blood feeding is carried out at night while the host is sleeping. The bed bug crawls out from its crack or crevice day time harbourage and sucks blood for several minutes. After feeding the bed bug returns to its harbourage.

SIGNS OF INFESTATION

As the bed bug carries out all of its activities at night it is unlikely that a bug will be actually sighted. After feeding bed bugs secrete semi-digested blood as faeces. It is these red/brown spots found on wallpaper which are the tell tale signs of infestation. It may also be possible in heavily infested properties to detect a sickly sweet smell. Bites on the human body often occur on the uncovered areas of the body at night (face, neck, shoulders, arms) in the presence of a bed bug infestation.

PUBLIC HEALTH SIGNIFICANCE

Bed bugs are not known to act as vectors of any human diseases, though they cause considerable irritation and a lowering of general health.

CONTROL

Complete eradication of bed bugs can be achieved, although a thorough insecticidal treatment is necessary. This can only be effectively carried out by a professional pest control operator.

Further information and advice can be obtained from the Pest Control Section

The treatment of bed bugs in an individual domestic premises is free of charge. However charging will apply where a block treatment is required or in commercial premises. Please ask for a quote.

If you would like an explanation of this fact sheet in your language or to obtain copies in Braille, on audio tape or large print please contact 01509 634560.

For further information contact:

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