

What To Do When Creepy Critters Move In

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Copley News Service

They're creepy and they're crawly and there's nothing much worse than walking into your kitchen and finding them munching away on your food.

No, we're not talking about the neighbor's kids or the relatives who won't leave - we're talking pests, the kind with wings, tails or antennae.

The little ones are termites, mice or termites or ants or roaches. We'll mention of make you cringe.

We're talking the theory of evolution, because no matter what you do to these critters, they just won't go away or will they?

Different pests cause different problems and require distinct methods of obliteration. Here are some tips on how to keep them from invading your life and what to do if they decide to settle in anyway.

TERMITES

Drywood, subterranean, Formosan - these are the three most common types of termites, and between them and their 41 other cousins they cost the American consumer over \$1 billion annually.

Subterranean termites are found in every state but Alaska and cause 95 percent of all termite damage. They nest in the ground and enter the home by building mud tunnels or entering through cracks.

Drywood termites are found in the humid Southern coastal regions of the United States. They live in the wood itself, not the soil, attacking through the air.

Formosan termites are found in small numbers in the Southern coastal region. They look and act like subterranean termites but their

colonies are twice as large, they consume wood six times faster than other termites and, consequently, are capable of wreaking far more havoc on your home.

To prevent termites from entering your home, Orkin Pest Control recommends the following steps:

- Remove wooden trellises from exterior walls.
- Don't let leaves accumulate in gutters or outside drains.
- Trim tree limbs so they don't touch or hang over the house.
- Ventilate crawl spaces to minimize moisture buildup.

- Remove tree stumps and firewood from beneath and around the house.

- Be cautious when building an addition to a house or when gardening; you could destroy existing termite barriers by disturbing treated soil around the foundation.

- When gardening, leave 18 inches of undisturbed soil adjacent to the house.

You'll know you've got problems, however, if you find mud tubes along the basement or attic walls or outside the house, if paint on wood starts buckling, if you see tiny holes in wood, or see flying or swarming insects, especially near light sources.

If your house is under attack, there's really no way of treating the situation other than calling professional exterminators. If you think you may have termites but are unsure, call a termite inspector. Since termites eat from the inside out, an inspector will be able to spot signs that the homeowner may not notice or know to look for.



COCKROACHES

Roaches are among the most disgusting and yet most fascinating of household pests. It seems they have an amazing ability to develop resistance to many common insecticides.

Cleanliness is one of the key ways to prevent the appearance of roaches. Take out garbage regularly, clean

the kitchen sink and run the disposal long enough to get rid of all food, rinse bathroom sinks, put away toothbrushes (they love toothpaste), store cupboard foods in airtight containers and don't leave pet food or bowls of fruit out at night and, finally, regularly vacuum rugs and sweep floors in or near eating areas.

If you get hit with roaches, there are a number of ways to get them under control. We hear a lot about traps, but according to some exterminators, traps and baits don't work. They will roach. The best way to get rid of them is to treat the source. To prove the most effective are bait stations, which can be placed in vulnerable areas in the home.

The roaches feed on the bait and return to the nest, resulting in contamination of both adults and eggs. Combat, which makes bait stations, also makes a crack and crevice gel for use in hard-to-reach places. Make sure that the product is child- and pet-safe before putting it out.

FLIES

There's no way around it. If you don't want flies, don't have a pet. At least that's the gospel, according to Lloyd Pest Control's sales

manager, Greg Augustine. Other than that, however, Augustine recommends superb hygiene to prevent flies, including continuous vacuuming (dispose of the bag outside after each session or pop out cut-up flea collars into the bag to kill what you pick up). Also groom your pet and don't forget to wash its bedding.

Check with your pet veterinarian to see if you can put your pet on an internal flea-buster called Program. It's safe for dogs or cats and is apparently more effective when ingested monthly.

If you get hit with flies despite your best efforts, Augustine recommends a holistic approach to getting rid of them. You'll know you've got problems if your pet is constantly scratching itself, if you notice bites on your own body or if you see tiny black spots on upholstery - that's flea fecal matter.

The trick to getting rid of flies is killing both the adult and the eggs. Bombs therefore won't be effective. They'll kill only the adult because they don't leave any residue. You'll need to apply a residual chemical that will stay around long enough to attack the larvae after they hatch. Lloyd's uses a combination of insect growth regulator and what they call an adulticide that are not toxic to either people or pets.

Of course, this approach also requires simultaneous cleaning of the animal itself, its bedding and any other places where fleas nest, such as carpeting and upholstery. If the animal goes in and out of the house, consider treating your outdoor environment with the chemicals as well.

In some parts of the country, ants are a regular menace. After a wet winter, they breed crazily. When the dry summer sets in, they look indoors for water. You find them in the kitchen, but also in the bathtub.



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