



Bed Bug (*cimex lectularis*)

The adult bed-bug is a flat, oval insect 5mm long by about 3mm broad. It is a reddish brown in colour.

Distribution

Bed-bugs do not fly so they must crawl or be transported in clothing, luggage, books, furniture, in fact anything that provides them with harbourage.

Bed bugs feed on blood and they can survive for long periods of time without feeding. Bed-bugs are usually associated with poor, overcrowded and unhygienic conditions but can be transported to any premises. In domestic premises most infestations are found in the bedroom. Their hiding places will be close to where their host sleeps - in the bed frame, mattress, bedside furniture, skirting boards or wallpaper, in fact anywhere that affords a dark hiding place during the daylight hours for these nocturnal creatures.

Significance

Bed-bugs' habit of biting a person and feeding on their blood can cause severe irritation to some people. The very thought of being preyed upon by such creatures is often sufficient to encourage immediate action to control them.

There are a number of factors that are helping to maintain the numbers of bed-bugs including the increased use of central heating and the resultant warm conditions which stimulate continuous activity and feeding over the winter months and the movement of second hand furniture which may transfer bed-bugs from one property to another.

Bed-bugs' blood feeding can cause severe irritation in some people. They are not, however, known to carry disease, unless, that is, you regard insomnia as such!

Life cycle

The female bed-bug lays pearly white eggs approximately 1mm long, which are 'glued' into cracks and crevices in bed frames, furniture, wallpaper, in fact anywhere that provides dark harbourage during daylight. They will lay about 150 eggs which will hatch in 10 to 20 days and will reach adulthood in approx. nine weeks under reasonable conditions, but will be considerably longer if the temperature is low. The adults live for up to 18 months, usually feeding weekly, but can survive for over a year without blood.

Control

You will need professional help in dealing with an infestation of bed-bugs.