

Notice: Guidelines on Bed Bug Control and Prevention

What is a Bed Bug Infestation?

Bed bug infestations have become a serious problem in housing throughout the country. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), bed bug populations have increased dramatically. Bed bugs are considered a pest of significant public health importance by the EPA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Although the insects are not known to transmit disease, bites may itch and cause an allergic reaction in some people, which may lead to secondary infections. The presence of bed bugs can also cause stress or anxiety.

Experts suspect the resurgence is associated with greater international and domestic travel, lack of knowledge regarding the complex measures needed to prevent and control bed bugs, changes in pesticide availability and technology, and increased resistance of bed bugs to available pesticides. Bed bugs are not an indicator of poor sanitation, but excess clutter can provide them more places to hide, making early detection and targeted control difficult.

Observing bed bugs is a confirmation that an area is infested. Adult bed bugs are reddish brown in color, appearing more reddish after feeding. They may be confused with ticks or small cockroaches. Bed bugs bite and suck blood from humans. Bed bugs are most active at night and bite any exposed areas of skin while an individual is sleeping. The bite itself is painless and is not noticed. Small, flat or raised bumps on the skin are the most common sign; redness, swelling, and itching commonly occur. If scratched, the bite areas can become infected.

You can look to see if you can identify the fecal stains, egg cases, and shed skins in crevices and cracks on or near beds. You should also look at other areas such as under wallpaper, behind picture frames, in couches and other furniture, in bedsprings and under mattresses, and even in articles of clothing. Again, observing bed bugs is a confirmation that an area is infested.

How Do I Prevent a Bed Bug Infestation?

The following are some suggestions everyone can follow to prevent bed bug infestations:

- Correctly identify the pest;
- Check for bed bugs on luggage and clothes when returning home from a trip;
- Look for bed bugs or signs of infestation on secondhand items before bringing the items home;
- Clean all items within a bed bug infested area;
- Reduce clutter where bed bugs can hide;
- Physically remove bed bugs through thorough cleaning; and
- Use pesticides carefully according to the label directions.

Bed bugs may often go undetected and unreported because they are active at night and residents may not be aware of their presence. Property owners and managers are strongly encouraged to take the following preventive steps:

- Raise resident awareness and prevention through education and involvement;
- Hold workshops for residents to learn to: 1) identify bed bugs, 2) create an unfriendly environment for pests and 3) report suspicions of bed bugs as soon as possible; Provide training for staff to identify bed bugs and perform ongoing preventive actions (such as periodic building inspections for infestation);
- Provide orientation for new residents and staff, post signs and offer handouts; Keep records including dates when and locations where pests are found; and Follow up on inspections and possible treatments.

What Do I Do if I Have a Bed Bug Infestation?

What Are My Responsibilities as a Property Owner/Manager?

Any report of bed bugs by residents should be responded to with urgency by property owners/managers. Within 24 hours of the resident's report, the property owner/manager should contact the resident and provide him/her with information about bed bugs and discuss measures the resident should take in the unit before the inspection is performed. The property owner/manager then has the responsibility to notify the Missouri Housing Development Commission (MHDC) of the infestation and actions being taken to remediate the situation.

Though a bed bug inspection and treatment may take time to schedule, the property owner/manager should endeavor to take appropriate action within a reasonable time period using the following guidelines:

1. Following a report of bed bugs, the property owner/manager or a qualified third party trained in bed bug detection should inspect the dwelling unit to determine if bed bugs are present. It is critical that the inspection be conducted by trained staff or third party professionals. Visual detection may be impossible using low level inspections. For this reason, multiple detection tools are recommended. Recent research indicates that "active" bed bug monitors containing attractants can be effective tools for detecting early infestations. Some licensed pest control companies use canine detection to verify the presence of bed bugs.
2. The inspection should cover the unit reporting the infestation and no less than the surrounding apartments consisting of the units above, below left and right, and should be completed within three (3) calendar days of the resident complaint if possible. If a reputable, licensed pest control company is not unattainable within three (3) calendar days, the property owner/manager is required to retain documentation of the efforts made to obtain qualified services. If an infestation is suspected but cannot be verified using these methods, the property owner/manager should re-inspect the unit(s) periodically over the next several months.
3. When an infestation is identified, the unit and surrounding units should be treated for bed bugs. Chemical treatments may be necessary, but are not reliable. Therefore, encasement, interception

devices, vacuuming, steaming, freezing and commodity or building heat treatments may be utilized as part of the bed bug control effort. Infestations are rarely controlled in one visit. Effective treatment may require two to three visits, possibly more. The length, method and extent of the treatment will depend on the severity and complexity of the infestation and the level of cooperation of the residents.

Generally, relocation from the unit is not necessary; bed bugs may cause discomfort but are not believed to carry disease. However, if reasonable temporary relocation is necessary, the property owner/manager may request withdrawals from replacement reserve for those days when treatment is actively occurring that may render the unit uninhabitable. All withdrawals of this type must have prior approval by MHDC.

Any temporary relocation must be carried out in accordance with applicable civil rights laws, including, but not limited to, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. For example, when persons with disabilities are temporarily relocated, they must be placed in housing that provides, at a minimum, the same accessibility features as the housing in which they currently reside. Additionally, the property owner/manager must ensure the right of return for any resident who is temporarily relocated while bed bug treatment is being performed.

Many properties are facing recurring infestations. Property owners/managers may offer protective tools to residents to help safeguard properties from recurrences. For example, you may offer your residents bed covers, climb-up interceptors or other detection or protection devices. You may voluntarily offer to inspect residents' furniture before move-in. As property owner/manager, you may require the non-chemical treatment of furniture upon move-in. You may also offer, but not require, nonchemical treatment or inspection of used furniture and/or non-chemical treatment of luggage before it is unpacked when a tenant returns from a trip. Residents may voluntarily use such services. These services or products are to be offered at your, the property owner's/manager's expense.

What Do I Do if I Have a Bed Bug Infestation? **What Are My Responsibilities as a Resident?**

It is the resident's responsibility to immediately report the suspicion of possible bed bugs in a housing unit or other areas of the property. Failure to notify the property owner/manager and cooperate in the treatment process is considered a lease violation. Early reporting allows the pests to be identified and treated before the infestation spreads. You, as a resident, are the first line of defense against bed bug infestations and should create living environments that deter bed bugs. Resident cooperation is shown to expedite the control of bed bugs and to prevent spreading of infestation. This includes reducing unreasonable amounts of clutter that creates hiding places for bed bugs, and regular checking of beds and laundering of linens.

Any report of bed bugs by a resident should be responded to with urgency by property owners/managers. Within 24 hours of the report, the property owner/manager should contact you, and provide information about bed bugs and discuss measures you should take in the unit before an inspection is performed. You should expect an expeditious response, however, a bed bug inspection and treatment may take time to schedule. The inspection should occur within three (3) calendar days.

Bed bug infestations can cause health concerns including physical discomfort, stress and anxiety. As a resident, please be advised of the following:

- Failure to cooperate with bed bug inspection, treatment and follow up treatment is considered a lease violation.
- A property owner/manager may not deny tenancy to a potential resident on the basis of the resident's having experienced a prior bed bug infestation, nor give residential preference to any resident based on a response to a question regarding prior exposure to bed bugs.
- Following a resident report of bed bugs, the property owner/management staff or a third party pest control representative may inspect any unit in the property to independently verify the presence of bed bugs and to treat an infestation. The property owner/manager may enter the unit to perform these activities in accordance with the lease.
- If a bed bug infestation is found in the unit, the resident may expect treatment to begin within five (5) days of the inspection, though depending on the form of treatment, this may not be possible.
- Residents may be advised that treatment may take several weeks. Residents are responsible for cooperating with the treatment efforts by allowing for heat treatment of clothing and furniture and refraining from placement of infested furniture or other items in common areas such as hallways.
- Property owners/managers may allow staff to help with moving and cleaning of furniture to accomplish the treatment effort.
- The resident will not be expected to contribute to the cost of the treatment effort.
- The resident will not be reimbursed the cost of any additional expense to the household, such as purchase of new furniture, clothing or cleaning services. However, the resident may be reimbursed the cost of protective bed covers, at the property owner's/manager's discretion.

More information on bed bug prevention may be found by accessing the following websites:

- **Healthy Homes Training:** *What's Working for Bed Bug Control in Multifamily Housing? Reconciling best practices with research and the realities of implementation.*
http://www.healthyhomestraining.org/ipm/NCHH_Bed_Bug_Control_2-12-10.pdf
- **National Pest Management Association Bed Bug Hub:**
<http://www.pestworld.org/pest-world-blog/the-bed-bug-hub-one-stop-shop-for-bed-buginformation>
- **National Pest Management Association Best Practices Website:**
<http://www.bedbugbmps.org/>
- **Environmental Protection Agency:**
<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/bedbugs/>