

Nuisance Insect Home Invaders

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As temperatures cool, we spend more time indoors. So do nuisance insect pests who invade our homes in search of cracks and crevices to hide in for winter.

Incidental invaders do not breed in homes or cause structural damage. They are best managed by sealing entry points to keep them out. Caulk cracks around windows, doors, pipes, and chimneys, replace damaged screens, and fix weather stripping and door seals as needed.

The most common nuisance insects are crickets, boxelder bugs and multicolored Asian lady beetles. A few others we might encounter are cluster flies, brown marmorated stink bugs and millipedes.

Cluster flies are also called attic flies as this is where they tend to be found. They also overwinter in natural tree holes and other cavities. In the home, they tend to gather in large numbers by windows.

Cluster flies are an introduced species from Europe. They are slightly larger than house flies and have golden-yellow hairs on their thorax. They fly sluggishly, making them easier to swat.

Unlike many flies whose larvae feed on dead things, cluster fly larvae feed within earthworms after adults lay eggs in soil cracks. Until fall arrives and adults begin looking for overwintering sites, these flies go unnoticed.

As with other nuisance invaders, the best management tactic is to prevent entry as previously described. Before cluster flies move indoors for overwintering, insecticide treatments can be applied to upper stories of building exteriors for control.

Once indoors, and when flies become active during sunny winter days or in spring, trap them with sticky traps or vacuum or sweep them for removal.

Brown marmorated stink bug is an invasive species we are seeing more of, especially in far eastern Nebraska. These stink bugs are brown and a little over one-half inch long. Marmorated means they have a marbled or spotted appearance.

We do have native brown stink bugs, but their underside is lime green which helps distinguish between the two.

Outdoors, adults will eat and damage fruit, vegetables and nut crops. The main issue most Nebraskans may deal with from these stink bug is fall invasion of homes. Again, they will not breed in homes or damage the structure, but they are annoying and smelly.

Sealing entry points is important. Another option with this insect is a spray of soapy water when bugs are aggregating on exterior walls. Dead bugs found indoors can be vacuumed or swept. If infestations are reoccurring, professional insecticide treatments outdoors may help.

Millipedes are dark brown, cylindrical and worm-like with numerous legs. They need moist environments to survive. Once inside the home, they usually curl up and die, becoming crunchy. Outdoors they are decomposers and feed on decaying leaves and dead plant matter. Like earthworms, they are beneficial.

Seal entry points to prevent them from entering the home where they are often found in basements. Once indoors, they can be trapped with glue boards or simply sweeping or vacuuming. If they are surviving in the home for very long, moisture and humidity levels may need to be reduced with dehumidifiers.