

BED BUGS AND BAT BUGS

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With traveling on the rise, so is the risk of bringing bed bugs home. In the last few years, the number of bed bugs brought into Extension offices for identification has increased.

Bat bugs are also brought in. It is easy to confuse these two insects, making it important to have a positive identification made before attempting control.

Bat and bed bugs are very similar in size and appearance. To tell them apart, they need to be viewed under a microscope to compare the length of some body hairs to the width of their eyes, along with other comparisons.

I share this as a reminder of the importance of positively identifying any insect before attempting control. Correct identification saves money, increases control effectiveness, and helps avoid unnecessary insecticide applications.

Bed bugs feed on humans and if not controlled their numbers and bites will increase, eventually making control more expensive and more involved. The risk of bed bugs spreading to the homes of friends or family members also increases.

Bat bugs feed mainly on bats and are only noticed if bats are present and then controlled; or if bats leave the roost. Without their preferred host, bat bugs may go in search of a meal and then bite humans.

If you find an insect you suspect is a bed bug or a bat bug, have it identified by a professional pest control operator or at a Nebraska Extension office. While neither bug is known to transmit diseases to humans, it is important to identify which is present as there is a vast difference in control methods.

Bat bugs are prevented or controlled by excluding bats from the home. For information on excluding bats, go to extensionpubs.unl.edu website and search for 'Bats in and Around Structures'.

Eliminating bed bugs from the home is more involved and complicated and is often best done by a professional pest control operator.

Homeowners do not want the expense of bed bug control if they have bat bugs. However, they do not want to aim control at bat bugs if they have bed bugs.

Neither of these insects will just appear in a home or apartment. Bats must be present in the structure for bat bugs to be present. Bed bugs are usually moved from place to place by people.

The most common ways bed bugs are brought in are by travelers bringing them home from infested hotel rooms, on used furniture, or by hitch hiking on clothing after a homeowner visits an infested home.

To learn about bed bug prevention and more, the publication 'Managing Bed Bugs' is available at extensionpubs.unl.edu. A number of excellent resources are also available at douglas-sarpy.unl.edu and lancaster.unl.edu.

If you have an insect you need identified or need help finding the above bed bug resources, contact your local Extension office or email kfeehan2@unl.edu.