

Pest Control Guidelines to prevent and treat infestation from bed bugs, cockroaches and fleas



The thought of creepy-crawlies lurking in our own homes, just out of sight, is enough to make your skin crawl, but how much do we really know about these insects and the services in place to help us deal with them? These guidelines will outline ways to prevent and treat an insect infection.

Bed Bugs

What are they?

Bed bugs are small, flat, parasitic insects that feed solely on the blood of people and animals while they sleep. Bed bugs are reddish-brown in colour, wingless, range from 1mm to 7mm, and can live several months without a blood meal.

How do people get them?

Bed bugs are usually transported from place to place as people travel. The bed bugs travel in the seams and folds of luggage, overnight bags, folded clothes, bedding, furniture, and anywhere else where they can hide. Most people do not realise they are transporting stow-away bed bugs as they travel from location to location, infecting areas as they travel. Everyone is at risk of getting bed bugs when visiting an infected area. However, anyone who travels frequently and shares living and sleeping quarters where other people have previously slept has a higher risk of being bitten and or spreading a bed bug infestation.

How can I prevent them infesting my home?

There are a number of simple things you can do to discourage bed bugs:

- Wash linens and mattresses regularly, linens are easy targets for bed bugs. Use hot water and dry the bedding for a minimum of 20 minutes, to kill any live bugs and eggs. You can also purchase special mattress encasements to reduce the likelihood of bed bugs infesting the mattress.
- Bed bugs like to live in dark holes and crevices, usually within eyesight of the bed. Inspect your house for potential places, such as in false ceilings. Seal any gaps with an appropriate filler can prove very effective.
- Vacuum carpets and furniture regularly.
- Watch out for bed bugs when staying away from home, especially when sleeping in places that may have been visited by many others, such as hotel rooms. If you are vigilant, you should be able to prevent the risk of taking bed bugs home with you from these places.

What are the signs of a bed bug infestation?

One of the easiest ways to identify a bed bug infestation is by the tell-tale bite marks on the face, neck, arms, hands, or any other body parts while sleeping. However, these bite marks may take as long as 14 days to develop in some people so it is important to look for other clues when determining if bed bugs have infested an area. These signs include:

- the bed bugs' exoskeletons after moulting,
- bed bugs in the fold of mattresses and sheets,
- rusty-coloured blood spots due to their blood-filled
- faecal material that they excrete on the mattress or
- nearby furniture,
- a sweet musty odour.



Cockroaches

What are they?

Cockroaches are one of the most commonly noted household pest insects. They feed on human and pet food, and can leave an offensive odour. They can also passively transport microbes on their body surfaces including those that are potentially dangerous to humans.

How do people get them?

Cockroaches thrive in conditions where they have access to food sources and moisture, they are attracted to poorly maintained dwellings that can provide this.

How can I prevent them infesting my home?

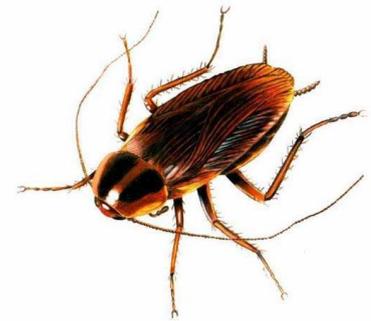
Cockroaches are usually easier to prevent than they are to cure. Seal up all entry points before pests get inside. Fill holes outside of the home between bricks and blocks. Use a compound that cannot be easily removed. Plug holes drilled through walls and floors.

Make sure windows and doors close tightly. Add weather stripping if necessary to plug entry points. Use door sweeps under exterior doors to reduce insects crawling under doors and into the house.

Shrubs planted too close to buildings can make it easy for pests to get inside. Prune shrubs and trees so branches do not touch buildings and do not plant too closely to your home.

What are the signs of a cockroach infestation?

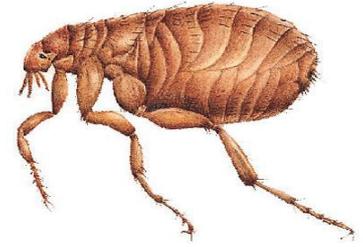
- Cockroach marks – liquid excreta produced when there is a lot of water, tends to be brown in colour.
- Droppings – tend to be found when there is an absence of water, look a bit like mouse droppings but are about 2mm in length.
- Eggs cases – tend to be found if there is a breeding area.
- Smell – a distinct smell tends to be present with a cockroach infestation.



Fleas

What are they?

Fleas are small, agile, usually dark coloured, wingless insects with tube-like mouth-parts adapted to feeding on the blood of their hosts. Flea bites are a cause of irritation and often become red and itchy.



How do people get them?

Fleas travel from infected hosts and spread to others, contact with a person or animal carrying fleas is enough to become infected. Fleas can also infest fibrous surfaces, such as carpets.

How can I prevent them infesting my home?

Fleas are a common problem in homes especially for those with cats or dogs. They are also frequently found when moving into a home that previously had pets. Even with the best care, it is difficult to protect fully against the risk of your dog or cat catching fleas.

When your pet has fleas, it is likely that it will scratch more often or try to bite the fleas in its fur. A flea comb and frequent grooming may be sufficient to prevent fleas establishing themselves, but your vet or pet shop will offer treatments to protect your pet from fleas.

Consult your vet if there are signs of irritation such as reddening of the skin or if there are thin patches in the coat of your pet.

If you have pets, it is essential to prevent fleas becoming established in carpets and bedding:

- Vacuum carpets and furnishings where pets sleep to remove fleas and eggs. Use the strongest suction that will not damage the fabric. Take care emptying the vacuum cleaner as fleas will still be alive.
- Shake or beat rugs and pet bedding outdoors so that fleas and eggs fall off
- Wash pet bedding every week, ideally at above 50°C to kill fleas
- Take care when transferring bedding, rugs, etc, to avoid spreading flea eggs
- Consider placing pet beds in areas without carpets such as on wooden floors

What are the signs of a flea infestation?

- Look for fleas hiding in your pets' coat.
- Check your pet for excessive itching and other signs of flea infestation, such as 'flea droppings'; these look like black grains of sand.
- Observe furniture, vehicle upholstery, carpeted areas and animal beds for signs of jumping fleas.
- Take note of painful bug bites beneath human knees without apparent cause.

Pest control Services

There are many private companies that will provide treatment for bed bugs, cockroaches and fleas for a fee. The Council can offer a [single treatment service](#) . Treatments are provided free of charge to customers on housing benefit, council tax benefit or income support.