



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA EXTENSION

NEWS & INFORMATION

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ST. PAUL, Minn. (4/17/2013) —Bed bugs have resurged to become a significant pest of the 21st century, but an entomologist with University of Minnesota Extension has made it his goal to beat the bed bug through research and education.

North Americans have had a 30-year reprieve from this pest, after bed bugs were almost completely banished as a result of mass treatments with older types of insecticides. "Recently though, bed bugs have found ample opportunity to increase in numbers, due to changes in the way we use insecticides, lack of public knowledge about the pest and increased mobility in society" said Stephen Kells, Extension entomologist.

Last year, the Let's Beat the Bug! campaign began helping Minnesotans learn about bed bug prevention and control. "Since then, we've expanded our reach by working with public health workers, landlords and others and producing videos and fact sheets in Hmong, Somali, Spanish and Arabic," Kells said.

Kells also expanded his research base, for example, studying the natural chemical, or pheromone, the bed bugs use to attract other bed bugs to a location. Such information could lead to better ways to disrupt the insect's spread and lifecycle.

Kells is doing laboratory studies on insecticides to determine how to make them more effective. Insecticides are far from the only treatment, though. Kells and his team have studied ways that heat treatments can end infestations and worked with companies that develop the heat treatment machinery. "Heat is a viable alternative to controlling these pests and Minnesota is a leader in using this technology to control bed bugs," Kells said.

In addition to homes and hotels, bed bugs may show up in in schools, retail facilities, office buildings, libraries and other public areas. Even hospitals have sometimes been challenged keeping them away. The Let's Beat the Bug! campaign has developed guidelines to help

They're back and they're gross, but bed bugs can be conquered

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schools and other facilities prevent and control bed bugs.

Insecticides available on store shelves are not effective. If you want to control bed bugs with insecticides, you must call a professional. The website provides tips to control and prevent bed bugs via non-chemical practices. Apartment dwellers should contact their landlords; property managers are responsible for keeping units free of infestations.

"Bed bugs spend 80 percent of their lives in hiding. Sprays and bug bombs often reach everywhere in living spaces except for where the bugs are hiding," Kells said. Professionals are better able to determine where the pests hide, either through careful inspections or the use of dogs trained to smell out bed bugs. They are also licensed to use controlled insecticides, and are trained to use them in a way that targets the bug populations while protecting humans and pets from the chemicals.

For detailed information, visit www.bedbugs.umn.edu or call the Bed Bug Information line at (612) 624-2200 or 1-855-644-2200, or email questions to bedbugs@umn.edu.