



SLEEP TIGHT...



Bed bugs. For Hotel and Property Management professionals, this is a relatively new issue and many of us don't know what to do about it. Law suits are sky-rocketing in volume across North America. If managers don't have a documented bed bug program, insurance may not cover legal and awarded claims expenses. Protect your customers and yourself from this new threat.

Don't Rely on Chemical Treatments

During the early stage of bed bug resurgence, many people experimented with chemical pesticide only methods because it is quick and inexpensive. In this method, a Pest Management Professional spray's the infested room. Verified research indicates that unless bedbugs are directly contacted with the insecticides currently available there is low effectiveness and even those bedbugs directly contacted may live several days before death. Scientists from the University of Kentucky reported a 200 to 300 times higher dose is required to kill bed bugs collected from the field (apartments, hotels, houses, etc.) as compared to those raised in their laboratories (Pest Control Technology magazine, July 2007).

Extensive use of aerosol insecticides can trigger bed bugs to hide deeper within furniture or move to other rooms – this explains how an entire apartment can become infested as bed bugs develop resistance to insecticides. Plus, this chemical treatment is even less effective on bedbug eggs; a week or two later the bugs are back.

Integrated Pest Management

Integrated Pest Management is required where bed bugs are active in your facility. This includes a combination of the following:

- identification to verify the insect is a bedbug
- detailed inspection to identify bedbug harbourages
- vacuuming
- heat/steam treatments
- box spring and mattress encasements
- bagging and removal of all curtains and bedding from the room for laundering
- targeted, pesticide use will be required, including void treatments for wall areas, and crack and crevice treatment to exposed harbourage areas

When choosing a pest control provider, review carefully with them that they are doing all of these things for the price quoted. Each treatment will require a minimum of two visits – make certain that's included also. A quick chemical spray will not suffice.

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Preventative Inspections

Treating bed bug infestations is expensive and prevents you from renting your rooms, which costs you double. Have a professional inspect 10% of your rooms each month. This will help identify and control bed bug problems before they get out of control, for a fraction of the cost of treatments.

Protect yourself. A documented bed bug inspection program can show due diligence has been taken in a court of law. Bed bug lawsuits filed against hotels are on the increase.

Bed Bug Proof Mattress Encasements

Hotels and other public accommodation, including hospitals, should use bed bug mattress protectors – encasements designed specifically to prevent bed bugs. This protector is inexpensive but very effective in preventing bed bugs from nesting within the box spring and mattress. It also prolongs the use of the mattress. Thus, a win-win situation!

Training of staff – housekeeping

Provide classroom bed bug training to your housekeeping staff. They will learn to identify bed bug infestations while cleaning rooms and to notify management. They will also carry bed bug infestations from room-to-room if not properly trained on how to avoid this. This is a low cost way to catch bed bug problems early before heavy infestations occur.

Quarantine the room of suspected activity, leaving all bedding, towels etc. in the room. Make the rooms above, below and on either side of the suspect room available for inspection. Relocate all guests immediately.

Don't leave rooms vacant for extended periods

During periods of low vacancy, don't leave the same rooms of sections of your facility vacant for long periods of time. Rooms that aren't inspected by housekeeping staff regularly leave bed bug infestations un-checked. Bed bugs can grow and populate even without a constant food source.

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The late Steven Graff who wrote this article was the Quality Assurance Manager at Abell Pest Control. Holding a Biological Science Honours degree from the University of Guelph, he has written and developed many nationally recognized papers, articles and training programs in the field of Pest Control, Integrated Pest Management and related fields.

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