

Bedbugs Advice Leaflet

The common Bedbug (*Cimex lectularius*) feeds on the blood of humans, and normally emerges at night from cracks in furniture joints, bed frames, wallpaper and skirting boards. The principal host of the bedbug is man, though other warm bodied animals such as domestic pets can be parasitised. Bedbugs leave a characteristic almond or mint like smell in rooms where they are active. Bites can be painful, which give rise to a hard whitish swelling. This advice sheet aims to provide you with information on the following:

1. General information about bedbugs
2. What can be done to identify and treat for bedbugs



1. General information about bedbugs

Unlike most other bugs, bedbugs cannot fly and must either crawl or be passively transported in clothing or more probably in luggage, furniture, books or other objects used as harbourage. When it has not recently fed, the body is paper thin, and almost red brown. After feeding, the body elongates and widens and the colour changes to a dull red. This apparent change is quite striking and may cause the observer to believe that two different species of insect are present.

Bedbug eggs are elongated and about 1mm long, white in colour, and have a distinct cap on one side. The eggs are laid individually or in clusters, and are cemented to wood, fabrics and other surfaces in places where bugs hide.

Bedbugs are more common in areas of high population density, normally large conurbations. Holiday resorts, hotels, hostels, and holiday camps have been noted for bedbug infestations. Normally, bedbugs reach their peak numbers in the UK towards early autumn.

Bedbugs will only search for blood donors when they are hungry. In between meals they spend their time in suitable hiding places in close vicinity to the bed. Feeding normally takes about 10 minutes. Following this the bedbug retreats back to its hiding place, where it digests, mates and lays eggs until it is hungry again. However, although they normally feed every 2 to 4 days, they have been known to live up to 12 months without feeding.

3. What can be done to identify and treat for bedbugs

Any property infested with bedbugs can be classified as being in a “verminous condition” under the Public Health Acts of 1936 and 1961, and therefore owners may be obliged to have their premises disinfected. Bedbugs are not, however, regarded as disease carriers but their continuous blood feeding can cause severe irritation in some people. This can result in loss of sleep, lack of energy and listlessness, particularly in children.

Indications of bedbugs, particularly in the initial stages are not obvious. You may notice a change in your bed, with a few blood spots on the sheets. As the infestation increases you would probably begin to see live insects, dark excreta marks and insect skin casts.

It is important to employ a professional person who knows what they are doing and in particular exactly where to look for them and where to treat. Also, it is important not to move material from any room that is infested, until the area has been treated.