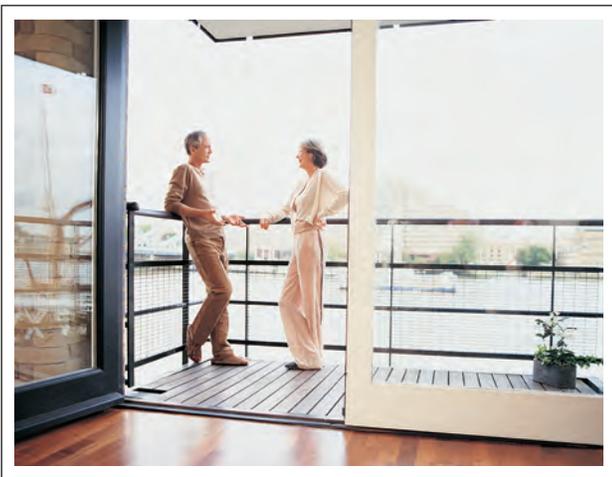


Bed bug control

You work hard to maintain your building. That's why it's important to ensure you're protected from all potential losses – including those caused by unwanted guests.

The control of insects and vermin should be included in any building maintenance and safety program. While there are many varieties of insects to be considered, bed bugs have risen to the top of the pest pile, due to a resurgence of infestations globally.



Bed bugs uncovered

Bed bugs have been around a long time, with evidence of infestations reaching as far back as 3,500 years ago in the Mediterranean region. Over time, bed bugs made their way around the world by hitching a ride with unsuspecting travellers.

Bed bugs were eliminated from most homes and businesses in North America after World War II by the use of the powerful insecticide DDT.

DDT was banned in the 1980s, after studies showed it to be a harmful carcinogen with negative effects on the environment, particularly on birds and fish.

Other chemicals replaced DDT and were used to treat bed bug infestations successfully until recently.

Bed bugs today

Like all insects, bed bugs have the ability to develop immunity to chemical agents over time. As a result,

they've become immune to the effects of the insecticides used against them.

With the rise in global travel and the growing trend to recycle furniture, a resurgence of infestations occurred in the early part of the 21st century worldwide, causing great concern among property owners and tenants alike.

A property infested may be deemed to be "unclean" but cleanliness has little to do with bed bug infestations.

Nonetheless, perceptions like this may result in a loss of business for landlords, so it's important to respond to the situation appropriately.

Treating infestation

Your first step is to find and hire a qualified exterminator who can:

1. Eradicate the bed bugs using best practices and the latest technologies.
2. Maintain a safe environment for people.
3. Ensure the bed bugs don't return.

Licensed, certified, and competent pest control companies must be contracted for all treatments and these companies should be members of a recognized national or provincial organization.

Standards for the treatment of bed bug infestations are written and revised regularly as methods evolve.

Using an integrated treatment plan

Currently the most effective approach to fighting bed bug infestations is an integrated treatment plan which includes one or more of the following:

- Insecticide applications such as the application of chemical sprays or fog.
- Steam applications, applied to furniture, carpets, floors and beds.
- Heat treatments – a method still under development – which heats a space to a temperature high enough to kill insects and

eggs. (see *What you need to know about heat treatments* in the next section).

- Cold treatments, a new technique that uses targeted extreme cold to kill insects and eggs.

Whatever method you choose, your contractor should use an “integrated” approach to pest control, designed to minimize the risk of a recurring infestation.

An integrated approach sets out procedures including:

- ✓ How to prepare the site for treatment by the property owner, and contractor.
- ✓ Recommendations to keep the site from being re-infested.
- ✓ Recommendations to prevent the spread of bed bugs to other locations.
- ✓ Roles and responsibilities, should a site become infested again.

What you need to know about heat treatment

There are concerns about the safety and efficiency of heat treatment as the effect of heat on building materials, fire sprinkler systems, portable fire extinguishers, electronic devices, plumbing and electrical wiring are still unknown. In addition, if the heat is not applied uniformly, the insects may survive.

Consider the following guidelines when using heat treatments:

- Use a licensed, trained and qualified contractor for heat treatments.
- Use electric heaters and fans to heat the interior spaces.
- Never use propane heaters to heat the interior of a building.

The contractor may deem it necessary to remove electronic smoke detectors or change or remove sprinkler heads. Since heat rises, temperatures at the ceiling may rise high enough to trip sprinklers or damage detectors.

To reduce this risk, sprinkler heads may be changed to the next highest temperature rating, and then changed back to the original temperature rating after the treatment. This is a preferred method as the fire protection system is still available during treatment.

If sprinkler heads are removed, the fire control system must be isolated and tagged as “shut down” by your fire equipment maintenance contractor. Consult with your fire maintenance company, fire monitoring company and local fire department to ensure proper shut down and restart is done.

A “hot work” permit system is also strongly recommended, which requires a dedicated fire watch in place during the time the fire system is impaired. All work must be strictly supervised and monitored for the duration of and after the treatment.

Resources

For more information or to find a licensed contractor in your area, visit the following websites:

The Canadian Pest Management Association
<http://www.pestworldcanada.net/cpma>

National Pest Management Association Inc.
<http://www.allthingsbedbugs.org/>

Visit the websites below and type “bed bugs” for additional information.

City of Montreal, Public Health
www.santemontreal.qc.ca/en

City of Toronto, Public Health
www.Toronto.ca/Health

Vancouver Coastal Health
<http://www.vch.ca>

For further information on this topic, please contact your independent insurance broker.

Visit www.avivacanada.com/riskmanagement for more Your guide to... information sheets on other loss control topics.

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