



Bed Bugs

Appearance and behaviour

- Bed bugs are 4 to 5mm long and are flat with an oval body.
- Bedbugs vary in colour from dark yellow to brown and can appear dark red when they have fed.
- Bed bugs can live in furniture, cushions, mattresses and walls in your home.
- They can travel through tiny spaces like cracks, and spread easily.
- They are blood sucking insects that feed on humans, pets, chickens, and other animals.
- They normally feed at night or in the dark.
- Although not painful at first, bed bug bites usually become red, swollen and itchy. Reactions to bites range from mild to severe.
- Bed bugs are not known to spread any diseases.

What to look for

Indications of a bed bug infestation include:

- small blood stains on walls and sheets
- small black dots in the seams of mattresses and bed frames
- skins shed from the early life stages of the bed bug
- a musty odour
- Bed bugs multiply rapidly and can quickly infest your home.

Bed bugs can enter your home if you bring in infested furniture, bedding, old books, laundry and suitcases. They may also enter your home via adjoining properties.

Bed bugs can be hard to get rid of because they hide in small places like the cording around mattresses, under buttons and in the seams of cushions. Check for bed bugs hiding in your bedding, curtains, furniture, cracks in the walls and behind loose wallpaper.

How to get rid of bed bugs

Arrange pest control. This can be done through the Council's pest control contractor by calling us on 01483 755855. There is a [charge](#) for this service.

Your pest controller will provide you with instructions on how to prepare your property and steps to take once the treatment is complete. To ensure that the treatment is effective, it is very important that these instructions are closely followed.

As part of the preparation for your bed bug treatment, you will be asked to launder all clothes, bed linen, curtains, soft toys and soft furnishings such as cushions.

Below is a general guide to killing bed bugs through laundering:

- Wash all items in the washing machine at 60°C or higher on a cycle that lasts for 30 minutes.
- Then tumble dry the laundry on the highest possible temperature, on a cycle that lasts at least 30 minutes or until the laundry is completely dry, whichever takes longer.
- Delicate items that cannot be washed and tumble dried, such as soft toys, can be placed in the freezer in a sealed bag. Items must be left in the freezer for at least 24 hours.

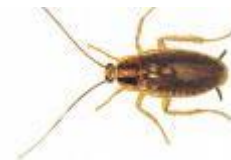
- Alternatively, laundry can be dry cleaned.

If you are a New Vision Homes tenant, please contact Repairs on 0300 3730373

Cockroaches

Appearance and behaviour

- Cockroaches are large insects which range in size from 10-23mm in length, they have long antennae and two sets of wings.
- The most commonly found species is the German Cockroach (*Blattella Germanica*) sometimes called the "steam fly" for their liking of warm steamy places such as laundries or boiler rooms.
- The German Cockroach is yellowish brown in colour and has a shiny leather like body and is often seen climbing up walls.
- The Oriental Cockroach (*Blatta Orientalis*) is less common and is much larger and has a darker, richer brown colour. They can live for up to one year.



What to look for

- Cockroaches are nocturnal by nature and spend the day hiding in cracks or under floor covering. They may be seen if you come home in the dark and put the lights on. They also emit a disagreeable almond like odour, but this is only noticeable if the infestation is large.
- Infestations may be introduced into domestic premises from foodstuffs from other premises. They can be transferred from other houses in laundry
- Cockroaches can carry food poisoning organisms on their bodies and will feed on almost anything including faecal matter.
- Contamination occurs when the cockroaches come into contact with foodstuffs.

How to get rid of cockroaches

If you have a cockroach infestation you can call us on 01483 755855, as we provide a domestic pest control service. There is a charge for this service.

Fleas

Appearance and behaviour

- Fleas are small insects which bite their hosts in order to extract blood. They live in furnishings, bedding and carpets when in the home.
- They are reddish coloured and are only a few millimetres long. They are instantly recognisable by their extremely long hind legs and flattened shape.
- Human fleas are rare but dog and particularly cat fleas will bite humans when their preferred host is not available.
- Flea larvae feed on organic debris and actively move deep into carpet where they pupate, and may remain undisturbed for many months.



- Adult fleas are stimulated by vibration and emerge hungry from their cocoons.

Keeping your home flea free

- A regular vacuuming of the floor, particularly around areas in which pets sleep or feed, will help reduce the chance of fleas breeding in your home.
- Regularly check your pet for signs of fleas such as scratching or distress, and regularly check and wash their bedding.
- You may wish to treat your pet routinely as a precautionary measure - ask at your veterinary surgery for more information about the methods and products available.

What to look for

Fleas should always be considered if your pet starts to scratch. If you part the coat so you can see the skin - you may happen to actually see a flea. They are very small, move very quickly and often jump as soon as you see them. More likely you see the presence of "flea-dirt", which is tiny little black specks just visible on the skin surface. Flea-dirt is actually the faeces of the flea containing digested blood. If you see this, then it is very likely that your animal has got fleas.

It is possible for humans to get bitten by fleas too. If any member of your family gets little red sore bites (often on the lower legs or feet) then it is worth considering that there may be a flea infestation in the house and you should get your pets checked out.

Getting rid of fleas

If you have a flea infestation you can call us on 01483 755855; as we provide a domestic pest control service. There is a charge for this service.

You should also treat your pet with a suitable insecticide available from your vet or pet shop.

Alternatively you may wish to treat the infestation yourself.

Pesticides are available from hardware stores - make sure you read and follow the instructions before use.

Mice

How to spot an infestation

- The house mouse is the most common mouse to be found in domestic situations.
- You can discover their presence through seeing grease smears on skirting boards, finding droppings or gnaw marks, or by hearing gnawing or scuttling behind the wall, they are particularly active at night.
- They will build a nest out of any available material, but often this will be in a place that you will not be able to check easily, such as below floor boards or in wall cavities or lofts.
- Mice will live in any situation in which their needs for food, shelter and water are met.



What damage do they do?

- Mice will cause damage to your home and breed very rapidly.
- Mice can carry disease, and may contaminate food and surfaces that they come into contact with.
- They can damage vital and expensive parts of your home, such as electrics and wall or loft insulation. Damaged wiring is a major cause of house fires and is unlikely to be easily spotted or fixed.
- Mice burrow holes in walls and cupboards, and pull up carpet. This can also be difficult and expensive to repair.

Keeping mice out of your home

- Above all, mice need food, but not much. 3 grams of solid food will feed a mouse for a day. They eat mainly grain, but will eat anything, including soap and candlewax if nothing else is available. Keep food out of reach from gnawing mice; don't leave food out unnecessarily and check for damage to packets or cupboards. Mice are often attracted by incorrectly stored refuse. Make sure all waste is stored in a lidded bin.
- Proofing your house against invasion will help reduce the appeal of your home to mice.
- Mice need shelter, so protect your home by keeping it in good repair. Ensure mice cannot access your property through pipes or small cracks by filling these or covering them with fine-mesh wire netting.
- Keep your garden rodent free by having compost heaps in order, secure sheds, and plants cut back. Mice can access lofts by climbing creepers on a wall, and even rough brickwork.
- Mice do not need much water. All but the driest foods supply their water needs already, but they will need some form of water supply. This will often mean going out to the garden on a regular basis.

Getting rid of mice

If you suspect that your property has become infested with mice, you can call us on 01483 755855; as we provide a domestic pest control service for mice inside your property. There is a charge for this service.

If you intend to carry out your own pest control, ensure that you follow the instructions before using any poison or device.

Rats

How to recognise a rat infestation

- The common brown rat is dark brown in colour with a grey underneath between 350 and 450mm long from nose to tail.
- Grease marks where the rats have brushed against surfaces such as fence panels.
- Scratching noises in cavity walls and lofts.
- Droppings (rugby ball shaped and roughly 1 cm long)
- Damage to buildings and structures (gnaw marks and holes)
- Damage to food stores



Places to check

- In and under sheds

- Under decking
- Compost heaps
- Along fences and walls for any rat holes (about the size of a golf ball).

What harm can they do?

- Rats can carry diseases such as salmonellosis and Weils' disease, as well as other microbial infections. When they gain entry into your home they can spread these diseases.
- Rats often attack food supplies, ruining cupboards full of food through contamination and gnawing.
- Gnawing can also destroy costly pipes and insulation, as well as creating a fire risk through damaged electrics.

Keeping rats out

Rats live in any situation that provides food, shelter and water.

They can commonly be found in sewer systems and gardens, but also live in lofts, wall cavities and under floorboards.

They are highly adaptable and mobile, so no property is completely safe from invasion, though there are ways to reduce the chances of your home being invaded:

- maintain a tidy garden, keeping possible shelter to rats to a minimum. Try to keep compost heaps in good order, sheds secure and cut back overgrown areas
- maintain your taps and pipes to reduce water in your garden, also checking any sewer covers are fitted tightly and in place
- do not leave rubbish where rodents can get at it. A locked shed or sealed bin are recommended and
- also make sure that any foods left for other pets or animals (e.g. bird feeders) are unreachable by rats, which are highly agile.

Getting rid of rats

If you suspect a rat infestation has occurred in your property, contact us on 01483 755855 as we provide a domestic pest control service. A charge will apply, which is subsidised, and for those in receipt of a means tested benefit, the treatment is half price.

If you are carrying out your own pest control, always read the instructions before using any pest control device or poison.

Squirrels

- The grey squirrel was brought to the UK from North America between 100 and 150 years ago. The native red squirrel was in decline at that point, and is now rare in most areas.
- As the name suggests, the grey squirrel is mainly grey in colour, but sometimes has a reddish flank or belly.



How to spot squirrel damage

- Squirrels are tree-dwelling rodents, and the damage that they cause can be compared with that of mice and rats.
- Most of the damage is found in the garden, such as plants stripped of fruit and grain. Squirrels are granivores, and grain and nuts are their primary diet.
- Some trees are stripped of bark by squirrels during the summer months; beech and sycamore are most often attacked.
- They can also enter loft spaces and cause damage to wires, timbers and insulation. They can be exceedingly noisy, especially during the mating season.

Guarding against squirrels

- Make sure that bird feed, pet foods and other food sources are inaccessible for any rodents.
- Make sure that your loft is free from rodents such as squirrels by blocking entry to them. Remember when doing this that your loft does need ventilation to avoid moisture build-up in your home, so a grill may be necessary over ventilation points.

Getting rid of squirrels

If you suspect a squirrel infestation has occurred in your property, you can contact us on 01483 755855 as we provide a domestic pest control service. There is a charge for squirrel treatments.

There is a law protecting the red squirrel, which is not considered a pest.

Wasps

Markings and behaviour

- There are several types of wasps frequently encountered in Britain. They all have the familiar black and yellow barring, and all behave in the same way.
- The queen wasp forms a nest in spring and after a few weeks the first workers are hatched and the colony expands. By the end of the summer the colony can reach sizes of up to 5,000 individuals.
- In autumn, several new queens emigrate from the colony and hibernate for the winter.
Spotting a nest
- Wasp nests start with a single cell and get larger over the summer.
- These are often hanging but can be on any surface.
- They are oval in shape and can be up to football-sized.



Wasp stings

- Stings can be painful and wasps often enter houses to find sweet substances, especially during late summer. However, wasps are likely to attack only if they or their nests are threatened.
- Wasp stings should be bathed with a **vinegar solution**.
- If the sting is in the mouth, sucking an ice cube will ease the discomfort but medical help should be sought.



- As some people are allergic to stings **MEDICAL HELP SHOULD BE SOUGHT IMMEDIATELY** at the first sign of excessive swelling or difficulty in breathing.

Guarding against wasps

- Each spring check your home, particularly the loft, eaves and sheds for new wasp nests. These will be small with only one or a few wasps, and easy to deal with.
- Wasps feed on fallen fruit and refuse, so make sure that any fallen fruit in your garden is cleared away regularly, and that rubbish is not accessible to pests of any kind.

Getting rid of wasps

If wasps have made a nest on your property, you can call us on 01483 755855; as we provide a domestic pest control service. There is a charge for this service.

Alternatively you may wish to treat the nest yourself. Pesticides are available from hardware stores, make sure you read and follow the instructions before use.