

Risk Reporter

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Wake up: Bedbugs making a comeback

Sleep tight. Don't let the bedbugs bite.

Chances are your grandparents tucked you in to that cute little rhyme oh so many years ago.

Chances are you thought nothing of it.

And rightfully so, as that biting insect has been virtually nonexistent in the United States the past 50-60 years.

No more.

For the last couple of years, bedbugs have been all over the nightly news telecasts.

"Nobody knows the exact reason," BedBug Central research entomologist Jeff White admitted. "But very few people will argue that we definitely don't have the same types of pesticides we once had. A lot of them (DDT, malathion, diazinon) were all very strong residual products. You could apply them in a house or cabin, and they might remain active for several months — if not years.

"A lot of the pesticides we have today, once they dry, have little effect on bedbugs," he continued. "That kind of opened the door to this bug."

As many camps prepare to open their doors for the 2011 season this spring, staffs need to tune in to this issue.

Step 1: Evaluation

"Many camp owners and personnel think that bedbugs won't make it through the winter," White said. "They definitely will, without an issue."

Go in expecting the worst.

"With a lot of these larger camps, I would be shocked if they weren't having some sort of issue somewhere on the property," White added.

Take the word of an expert. White has a bachelor's degree in biological sciences from Rutgers University and a master's degree from the University of Florida. He has appeared on ABC World News Tonight with Diane Sawyer, NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams, the Today Show (NBC) and The View (ABC). His BedBug TV show has more than 400,000 viewers.

Focus on sleeping areas first.

"They're called bedbugs for a reason," White said. "They want to be

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close to a sleeping person. They're attracted to the chemicals on your skin. Bedbugs typically take five to 10 minutes to feed, so they want to feed on people while they're lying still in bed."

Your evaluation can start with any of three measurement methods:

- **Night watch monitors** — This active approach releases attractants like carbon dioxide and heat to bring bedbugs to it. The \$450 monitors sit under bunks for four or five days. Each monitor can usually cover a 10- to 15-foot radius.

"We have found these to be about 80 percent effective," White said. "The thing you need to be careful about is these monitors are temperature-sensitive. A lot of camps have uninsulated buildings, and if it's too cold, these will not work."

- **Interception devices** — This passive approach is a good way to both monitor and control the problem. "I call them glorified ashtrays," White said. "They go under the legs of beds and couches and catch bedbugs as they travel to and from the bed. Bugs walk up the outer wall of these devices and fall in this well. They can't get out because the wells are too slippery." Cost is approximately \$5.50 apiece.
- **Canine scent detection** — These dogs are highly trained like their bomb- and drug-sniffing counterparts. "They should be able to identify as few as one bug or egg, and they should be able to tell the difference between live and dead," White said. "I would say about 50 percent of the time you should be able to find bugs where the dog said they were."

Step 2: Treatment

Finding the problem is not a given.

"When you have bugs biting somebody in bed and then they go back to where they were hiding after they're done feeding, it can be very difficult to detect the problem," White said. "You have campers who are being bit over the course of the summer and reacting to God knows what else — mosquitoes, poison ivy, all of this other stuff. You can confuse their bites."

Once you know you have a bedbug infestation, White says there are four possible approaches to rectify the situation:

- The traditional approach is to use pesticides and other non-chemical tools. "Research has shown that a lot of the pesticides we use today may not be as effective as we thought," White cautioned. "So it's important for pest-control companies to incorporate other techniques into their program." Some of those other techniques would be vacuums, steamers and bed encasements for mattresses and box springs that serve dual purposes — keeping bugs in and locking them out. The pesticide component is a liquid residual spray in a tank. "A better component is dust," White said. "When bedbugs get into these dusts, they dry them out. Dusts are one of the most effective pesticides we have."

- **Intense heat.** "Companies bring in equipment that can heat entire buildings up to 120 degrees and hotter and then hold that temperature for 3-5 hours at a time," White said. "Once you get over 120 degrees, bedbugs and their eggs will die very rapidly." Some camps are purchasing the equipment at a price that could go anywhere from \$50,000 to \$80,000.

- **Fumigation.** "That's very different from bombing," White said. "Bombing is when you take those aerosol cans and release them in a room. That is completely ineffective for bedbugs. With fumigation, you take a tent or tarp to cover a building and then release a fumigant inside. It's one of the most expensive methods — it can cost \$10,000 to \$20,000. But if it's done properly, all of the bugs are gone."



- **Smaller heaters.** This is a method to heat belongings — not buildings. "I call them dryers without the tumble," White said. These 3 feet by 2 feet boxes, which cost about \$320, were originally designed to hold suitcases. "You can put different items in, plug it into the wall and heat those items up," he added. "It's good for nonlaunderables like shoes. It doesn't hurt for a camp to have one or two of these on-site."

Step 3: Education

Camps need to be proactive before they ever greet the first child of the season.

"These bedbugs are going to be introduced no matter what you do," White said. "There's no true prevention for bedbugs — there's nothing you can spray that will keep the bugs out."

How do they get in?

"One of the biggest concerns is what campers are bringing with them from home," White said. "These bugs are making it into the camps because campers are having issues at home and bringing the bugs with them."

Parents need to be educated now — not when their children are getting off the bus or out of the car.

"A camp I am working with now is sending out parent education forms," White said.

What might they convey?

"We know it's a huge concern," White offered. "We're bringing dogs in just after the kids arrive to inspect the entire camp and make sure nobody brings some problems in, so we can address things early on."

Consider the alternative.

"If you do it quietly, don't say anything and the kid calls home and says 'Hey, Mom, they brought a dog in to sniff my bags.'"

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**Slips and falls top workers' compensation claims**

For most occupations, slips and falls represent the highest or second-highest type of workers' compensation claim. In addition, they are responsible for many general liability claims involving guests.

Based on a five-year study (2006-2010) conducted by Church Mutual, camps and conference centers follow a similar claim pattern. Our study analyzed workers' compensation and bodily injury liability claims that occurred at camps we insure and revealed:

- One out of every four workers' compensation claims involved a slip-and-fall-related incident.
- Slip-and-fall incidents were responsible for the highest workers' compensation claim severity (41 percent of the incurred costs).
- Bodily injury liability claim incidents involving slips and falls generated the highest frequency (44 percent of reported claims) and highest severity (43 percent of the incurred costs).

There are several areas within a camp's facility where workers' compensation claims occur, and kitchens are a good place to start. Floors can easily become slick due to spilled water, dropped food and accumulated cooking grease residue.

Proper housekeeping activities and installing slip-resistant floor surfaces are the foundation of any slip prevention program. Not all floor tiles are the same when it comes to slip resistance. Check with your flooring contractor to determine which tiles offer the best slip-resistant and cleaning features. Also, follow required floor cleaning procedures to help maximize the removal of food, dirt and grease residue.

Requiring kitchen staff to wear slip-resistant footwear is an important strategy for reducing the likelihood of slips and falls.

Several of the large discount store chains around the country sell brands of "slip-resistant" shoes. They have soles that incorporate a combination of tread design and tread material (usually a softer and faster wearing material) that make them more slip and oil resistant.

Edward A. Steele
Risk Control Manager

Seasonal Spotlight**Vigilance reduces drowning deaths**

Over the past 10 years, 51 Church Mutual customers have drowned.

Camp directors and the front-line personnel they employ as lifeguards and counselors need to be especially sensitive to the subject — the average age of the 51 victims was 16.6 years old.

Almost 90 percent of those deaths happened between May and September.

How do we reduce those numbers?

"On a different day, with the same group, you may not be as vigilant as you should be," American Red Cross Manager of Aquatics Technical Development Connie Harvey cautioned. "But you need to be on your toes all of the time. Every day must be a new day as far as staying vigilant and alert and looking for situations that could go wrong."

Protection is not a simple number measured by counting lifeguards and swimmers.

"Sometimes, state regulations may have some kind of ratio as far as patrons to guards," American Red Cross Health and Safety Expert Don Lauritzen pointed out. "But that's their ratio and not ours."

Harvey adds that response time is the most critical factor.

"You need to think about how long it would take a lifeguard to respond in any emergency that would occur," she said. "Making certain that you have an adequate number of lifeguards based on the unique characteristics of your facility. Looking at how big their area of responsibility is and how long it would take them to get there, especially when you factor in some of the features that might make it harder."

Such as?

"Do you have to move around an inflatable?" Harvey asked. "Can you see the inflatables from all sides? Do you have direct access, or do you have to come down off your stand and run to get there?"

Lifeguards who have been certified through nationally recognized training organizations are ideal and have become easier to find.

"Our (American Red Cross) numbers have been going up the last two years," Harvey pointed out. "Where we were suffering lifeguard shortages in the past when everything in the economy was really robust, we have actually been increasing in the economic downturn. Our guess is that maybe some of the other jobs have dwindled."

Church Mutual has a Swimmer Safety Program that has been distributed to more than 1 million campers nationwide.

The color-coded wristbands allow lifeguards to quickly spot the ability levels of all swimmers, which were determined by testing when they first arrived at camp.

▪ For more information, visit www.churchmutual.com/swim.

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Risk Reporter: What are some of the key issues that need to be addressed in transitioning from one group to another?

R. Mickelson: It is critical to make sure you have appropriate supervision for both groups—how many staff located with which group may shift as time progresses (more staff might be with outgoing campers initially and then moved to be available for the incoming campers). Everyone needs to be very clear on their role: where is the staff located, what are they supposed to do and how long do they stay and do this task? What physically happens where/when? Traffic flow could be an issue. Do you have enough parking? Is it clearly marked? If buses are used for transportation, is there a specified “turnaround” site? Do you have restroom facilities for all involved? If it is an overnight camp, where is luggage stored? Are cars allowed to drive to the cabins/tents, or is pickup in a centralized location?

Risk Reporter: What essential paperwork is involved both in checking out and checking in campers?

R. Mickelson: For check-in:

- Health history forms
- Medication verification forms
- Pickup confirmation form
- Any special needs forms
- Master list of campers to note arrival

For checkout:

- Release forms
- Master list of campers listing who is picking the camper up

Risk Reporter: What are some common rules for drop-off and pickup points when both processes are happening at the same time?

R. Mickelson: It is best to have separately designated time for pickup and drop-off. Even having an hour break between the two tasks is better and much less confusing. If you can't arrange this, you must have separately designated areas for each to occur. Make sure there is appropriate signage and “traffic control” (both foot and vehicle traffic). Determine where vehicles will be allowed. The fewer vehicles in the camper living areas, the better (safer). Have a rehearsal with your staff prior to the initial camper drop-off and pickup, so they have the opportunity to actually see what it looks like. Designate “floater” staff who can jump in and help out where the bottleneck might occur (could be the actual camper check-in line or the location where a parent signature is required to pick up the camper).

Risk Reporter: Should camp health center personnel be involved at check-in to address campers' special needs?

R. Mickelson: Yes, there should be some form of medication check-in with both camper and parent/guardian present. They should be involved in determining what collection/storage system will be used for medication prior to check-in (Ziploc® bags work well as do small brown paper bags labeled with camper name/unit). A table should be set up to discuss other special needs: dietary, sleep, restricted activity levels, etc. Have a private space available for any potential discussions that need to occur.

Rhonda Mickelson is a director of standards for the American Camp Association.

She addresses procedures as camps should go through on a regular basis from week to week.

Her comments are food for thought for camp directors as they re-evaluate their current procedures, evaluate their processes and determine what works best in their situation.



their situation.