

Extension Notes

Personal Column for October 26, 2010

By Gary Hall, ISU Regional Extension Education Director

“Kill It With Your Shoe!”

“Come here quick! Bring your shoe! It’s right there! See it?!?! Get it! Kill it with your shoe! No, don’t leave your shoe there. Take it outside along with that dead body!” Ah the sounds of fall. When insects seek shelter from the oncoming winter cold in your home you may have the opportunity to hear the melodious tones of, “Kill it NOW!”

Keeping fall pests out of your home can be a challenge, but being prepared and properly treating infestations can make fall a much more pleasant time.

The first type of home invaders come in on the ground: crickets, cockroaches, centipedes, millipedes, ground beetles, spiders and ants. These pests are attracted to the leaf litter and debris found around the foundation of your home. From the foundation, these creepy crawlies will then wiggle their way into homes through any crack or crevice they can find.

Every fall, we should walk around our home and look for any small openings bugs can slip through. Those cracks and crevices should be caulked and sealed. Check the seal around windows and replace broken screens. Make sure door gaskets are firmly in place and that all other openings are sealed. Also check plumbing fixtures like water spigots for possible entryways. Older homes are more of a challenge but anything you can do to prevent the entry into your home would reduce the number of times you hear, “Hurry up it’s moving really fast! Eeeeeee!!!”

Perhaps you know you are going to have some problems with these ground pests. Application of a perimeter spray may be in order. A number of insecticide products are available at garden centers, but make sure they are labeled for outside use. Spray up the house walls 3 to 4 feet and out from the house 3 to 5 feet. This will establish a barrier that kills bugs.

The second type of fall invaders enter homes in the air: house flies, cluster flies, yellow jackets, boxelder bugs, miller moths and mosquitoes. These airborne pests are generally not affected by foundation sprays so it is even more important to seal and caulk all cracks and openings.

Many of these pests are also highly attracted to outdoor lights, such as porch lights, and enter homes when nearby doors are open. Turning off outdoor lights when they are not in use not only saves energy but helps keep pests out of homes.

If bugs do get inside your home, the first step should be to set out sticky traps. Not only will this remove many of these unwanted guests, but it will help monitor which pests are inside.

For more serious problems, indoor-use aerosol sprays are available. If the infestation is severe, it is always best to hire a professional pest control operator. However, there is no need to call pest control at the sight of a single cricket or centipede. Sticky traps, along with the old-fashioned

strategies of sucking bugs up in a vacuum cleaner, picking them up in a tissue or crushing them beyond recognition with your shoe or other heavy object can usually get the job done. Plus you will be viewed as the hero of the one who exclaims, "I don't care what it is or where it came from, just KILL IT!"

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