

Got Bugs?
Solutions to Pest Problems
by Tisha Cook

The multi-housing industry has a number of issues when it comes to pest control. Because of the close proximity of apartment community living, often the problems are shared and difficult to control. One of the main issues is communication from the residents to the on-site staff and then to the contracted pest control company and vice versa. The target pests are often not identified accurately by their descriptions when the complaint arrives in the office.

Although your community may have trained licensed professionals treating the premises, certain issues can be missed that can be costly for the community and often take longer to overcome.

A few steps to remember when taking a request:

- Target pest - get as much information as possible from the resident about the pest of concern.
- Location of pest – where is the pest?
- How long has the problem been happening?
- Special treatments require certain instructions – be sure to ask your technician for the appropriate notifications such as notice of flea treatments.

Roaches

One of the most common problems is roach infestation, which is often the result of a resident keeping unsanitary conditions, such as a dirty kitchen and pet food left out. A resident will often overlook certain things in the kitchen, such as grease on the stove or open containers, or will use wallpaper, shelf paper and even newspaper to line cabinets and drawers, creating a harbor for these pests.

In addition, in some parts silver-fish are a year round nuisance. These pests are usually found near the plumbing pipes, as in bathrooms and kitchens. Residents who store boxes with magazines or books often create a harbor and a healthy food source for them.

On-site staff can take the following steps to fight roaches:

- Caulk underneath the cabinets along walls.
- Caulk under countertops where they meet cabinets.
- Seal any openings under bar tops.
- Close gaps or holes where pipes come through walls.

Ants

Another common pest is the ant. When you realize that your community has an ant problem, check with your landscaping company. Ant control may be included in your landcare services, which can help prevent the indoor ant problem from occurring and can cut down on unneeded expenditures. If not included in the contract, your pest control service provider can offer a variety of treatments for ants, both indoor and outdoor. Treating the outdoors appropriately will greatly cut down on the ant problem indoors, saving the community money.

Fleas

With spring in the air, fleas become a huge problem. Fleas are annoying small, wingless insects that feed on the blood of humans and animals, laying about dozens of eggs per day. This is a frequent expense for apartment communities because of the common grounds. Though we love our pets, they provide food for these pests. Buildings sometimes become infested with fleas even when there are no pets around. Other animals such as bats, roof rats, squirrels, raccoons and wild dogs and cats commonly nest in structures and may be the source of an infestation.

Vacuuming removes up to 30 percent of flea larvae and up to 60 percent of flea eggs from a carpet, as well as the larvae's food supply. Advise your residents to vacuum under furniture, cushions, chairs and beds and along walls and to discard the vacuum cleaner bags. Fleas can continue to develop inside vacuum cleaner bags and re-infest. An experienced pest control company can treat for fleas and seal openings through which wildlife may enter buildings.

Because flea pupae are hard to kill with insecticides, an additional follow-up treatment is needed seven to 10 days after the first application. The only way to gain control is to have the residents' cooperation in following flea treatment instructions. Because of the flea's short life cycle it is important to remember that fleas can become resistant to insecticides if exposed too often.

Rodents

Rats and mice are also a major problem in big cities. Time is crucial in getting these pests under control.

A few steps to follow in gaining control:

- Remove food sources from porches to keep critters from feeding at your communities.
- Store food supplies in rat-proof bins.
- Dispose of garbage accordingly, with covers closed on dumpsters or containers.
- Remove animal carcasses, which may attract rats.
- Do not leave scraps of food around.

Maintaining several permanent rat bait stations in strategic locations, even after rat infestation has been controlled, should eliminate rats that can migrate from neighboring areas and will help prevent another infestation. Inspect baits frequently and replace them with fresh material whenever necessary.

Termites

Finally, there are termites. Problems occur when termites attack the wooden elements of human structures – homes, businesses and warehouses. Their presence is not readily noticed because they hide their activity behind wallboards, siding or wood trim. Moisture is important to subterranean termites, which have very little resistance to dehydration. To survive, they must maintain contact with the soil (their primary moisture source) or other above-ground moisture sources, such as in structures with defective plumbing or guttering.

Termites foraging for food above ground protect themselves with shelter tubes, which are sometimes called mud tubes, allowing them to move vertically between the soil and the food source. Any material in direct contact with the soil – such as trees, vines or plumbing fixtures – services as an avenue of infestation. If left untreated, the problem can become severe, causing thousands of dollars in structural damage and raising the cost to begin treatment. Contracting with an experienced pest control provider can help prevent the structural damage from occurring, saving your community money.

A number of other pests surround us every day. Remember, the first line of defense is the on-site staff and communication with your service provider. Keep in mind that pest problems will not disappear overnight.

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