



BULLETIN #1 2007

# VIEWPOINT 50

## SUPPLEMENTARY BULLETIN #1

### DEALING WITH HOUSEHOLD PESTS



Most people can relate to the surprise, shock and revulsion of coming across pests in their homes. After their presence is detected one can't help but wonder how many of the troublesome creatures exist and how difficult it may be to get rid of them. Once settled inside your suite, pests can threaten your sanity, your health and your home. Do not ignore the presence of a cockroach or another pest and hope it will disappear. Deal with the pests immediately before they multiply into a problem that you will be unable to handle.

Common household pests include insects, such as ants, cockroaches, termites, flies, moths and wasps. Urban wildlife, such as rodents, raccoons, bats and birds can sometimes become problems in buildings as well. Insects are the most common and troublesome pests found in buildings and this fact sheet focuses on them.

Pests can creep inside a grocery bag from the store or a suitcase from travels abroad. They can move into our home, from the suite next door or the one above or below. Buildings have many "highways" for pests to follow. They crawl along heating ducts or water pipes and they squeeze into tiny cracks and gaps in the floors, walls and doorways.

Once inside your suite, a pest can probably find everything it needs to survive and multiply quickly. No matter how neat and clear your suite is, the pest will likely locate the food, water, warmth and dark hiding places it needs to live and breed.

In individual condominium suites, dealing with pests is likely the responsibility of the owner. If the pests come from common areas, it could be the responsibility of the condominium corporation.

Regardless of whether you own or rent your own your suite, there are steps you can take to make your suite less inviting to pests. If the pests are already there, the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach is very effective at reducing or eliminating them. Pest proofing your suite and the Integrated Pest Management process may involve various systems. Before taking any actions that might affect other areas of the building, obtain your building's management approval.

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## Understand the Enemy: Why Pests Seem to Enjoy Our Homes

Pests tend to enjoy our homes because the conditions there are more than suitable for them to survive and thrive. They can find food, there are lots of places to hide and they don't have to worry about the numerous natural predators they would otherwise face outside. Residents of condominium can better prevent and reduce infestations by understanding how pests get into our homes and what they need to survive.

Most pests are attracted by debris from human or animal activities and the shelter our homes offer. The first priority for effective pest prevention is to understand your adversary. The goal is to identify and seal pest entry points, eliminate sources of food, establish good house keep habits, and if necessary, actively eliminate pests □with traps and pesticides.

## PEST PROOFING YOUR CONDOMINIUM

### Find and Seal Pest Passageways

Pests will take various routes to find their way into your apartment. Insects enter suites through poorly sealed or open windows and doors, cracks and crevices in walls or foundations, and openings around pipes and other penetrations. Insects can squeeze through extremely small openings. Vents and air ducts can provide an entry point for birds, rodents and insects. Insects can also attach themselves to pets, or to people and the items they are carrying.

Look under the kitchen sink and you see a gap between the sink drain pipe and the wall or floor. Holes in window screens, gaps around window trim and crack between the floors and the walls may all offer travel routes for pests. Try to seal off these roadways by:

- Sealing holes in walls around plumbing and electrical lines between apartment units. Look for penetrations in utility closets, under kitchen sinks, behind toilets and sinks in bathrooms. Usually

these holes can be sealed with caulking or spray foam

- Caulking cracks and crevices in cupboards and walls.
- Ensuring window screen are properly fitted and are in good repair to keep flying and crawling insects out.
- Sealing the gap under the corridor to suite door with weather-stripping (Note: this may adversely affect the air quality in your apartment. If you note lingering odours, stale air and high humidity, you may have to remove the weatherstripping.)

## Removing the Welcome Mat: What Pests Need to Survive and Thrive

Pests seek out our homes, as they need the food and shelter. By understanding the conditions that give pests an opportunity to thrive, you will be better prepared to develop an action plan to remove or limit these conditions. Making your suite a less welcoming place for pests.

**Climate:** The optimum temperature for many insects is between 20° and 30° (68-86°). Most insects will die if exposed to temperatures between -2° or above 45° for a period of time. They generally proliferate at humidity levels between 60% and 80%. Insects need moisture to survive, and some (such as silverfish thrive on high humidity and standing water.



**Water Sources:** Many Pests are attracted to damp areas. Sources of water and potential insect habitats include kitchens, bathrooms water pipes in concealed spaces, and water in the building envelope, custodial closets, water fountains and climate-control equipment. Standing water in refrigerator condensation pans and air conditioner drain pans can provide water for pests to live on. Water on a roof near a ventilation system intake louver or in other locations can raise humidity levels and provide an excellent environment for insects.

**Food Source:** Open foods and food waste, dander and dead skin represent food for all types of pests. Potted plants and cut flowers, water in vases and over-watered plants, dead and dying plants and the nectar and pollen of flowering plants encourage the presence of pests.

**Habitats:** Several common pests thrive in small, dark, undisturbed spaces. Insects like to live in dark, tight spaces (such as corrugated boxes and cracks in walls), and are attracted to piles of boxes or other materials left undisturbed for long periods. Insects also live in quiet spaces like concealed corners in cupboards, the undersides of bookcases and behind furniture. Dust and dirt are hospitable environments for many pests. Dead insects or insect debris can also attract other insects. Dirt and clutter make it difficult to see pests, so a problem may go unnoticed for some time.

### **Good Housekeeping Habits: Making Your Suite Hostile to Pests**

- The following list provides tips on what you can do to make your suite a less desirable residence for pests:
- Wipe counters, tables and other eating surfaces after meals and snacks.
- Avoid leaving dirty dishes overnight; if you need to do so, rinse the dishes first. If you must soak a pot overnight, fill it with hot soapy water.
- Avoid leaving dirty dishes in a dishwasher overnight.
- Wipe stove top and burners every night.
- Rinse cans and bottles before recycling.
- Clean food spills promptly, especially on carpets and furniture.
- Put garbage and compost in containers with lids and dispose frequently.
- Store food in sealed containers or in refrigerator.
- Keep cupboards tidy and clean.
- Store paper bags in cupboard or drawer away from kitchen; don't stuff in space beside refrigerator.
- Use bathroom fan or open window for half hour after every bath or shower to reduce humidity.
- Clean your apartment frequently and thoroughly to remove dust and insect byproducts.
- Improve ventilation to reduce humidity and eliminate damp areas.
- Clear hard-to-clean areas regularly; pull out refrigerators, stoves, microwaves and other appliances. Clean and vacuum behind, beside and under appliances.
- Don't let water stand in houseplant dishes or in pan under refrigerator.
- Check water faucets for leaks and ensure plumbing under kitchen or bathroom sinks is not leaking.
- Caulk gaps around sinks and tubs to prevent water from entering walls.



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## **Maintain Your Suite**

Buildings with cracks, holes and other openings to the outside practically invite pests to stay. Report any openings you may find to the building management. Also make sure your condominium corporation is made aware of water leakage through roofs, walls and windows. The previous list of housekeeping tips can be adapted for the common areas of the building as well.

## **Spread the Word**

Pest proofing your suite works best when the tenants and owners in your building do likewise. Pest problems in one suite, if left unchecked, can spread to neighbouring suites and common areas. If everyone joins in a common effort to eliminate food sources, establish good housekeeping habits and reduce entry points for pests, the potential for pest problem is reduced and, if pests do integrate, it will be much easier to deal with them.

## **INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT**

The Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategy is widely recognized as the most effective approach to dealing with unwanted insects. Endorsed by the scientific community, government and the pest management industry, the five-step IPM approach relies primarily on non-chemical means (such as controlling climate, food sources and building entry points) to prevent and manage pest infestations. IPM combines changes in the pest's living space with the targeted use of pest control products to eliminate or reduce pests to acceptable levels.

Conventional pest control tends to ignore the causes of pest infestations; it relies instead on routine, scheduled pesticide applications. Pesticides can provide temporary fixes, but tend to be ineffective over the long term especially if the source of the problem is not addressed. Pests' food, water and shelter must be removed. The most effective solution is to follow the IPM approach to control pests. Also, inform your building managers as soon as you notice a problem. The pests may not just be in your suite and you will need a concerted effort to deal with them effectively,

Prevention begins with building managers and extends to other people in the building, including custodians, trades and, most importantly, the residents themselves. A successful IPM program is a collaborative effort involving building management, maintenance and residents.

The five steps of IPM are;

1. Inspect.
2. Monitor
3. Decide
4. Control
5. Evaluate.

### ***Inspect your suite closely***

to confirm there is a pest problem

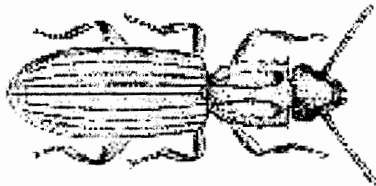
to identify the kind of pest

to locate the problem areas

to look for the reasons pests are entering your home.

Portions of this article were supplied by The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

## MORE HELPFUL INFORMATION



Grain beetles feed on grains, cereals, macaroni, dried fruits and nuts, seeds, sugar, candy, tobacco and dried meats. They can easily get into packaged food.

### How can I keep stored beetles from getting my food?

When you get home from the store, place your food into a tightly sealed container. You can use either a Ziploc plastic bag or a container with a pop-off lid. Insects can crawl through the threads of a screw-off lid. If you did not notice the food was infested when you brought it home, at least the beetles will be confined to the container. Keeping food storage areas cool and dry also helps.

### How do I get rid of stored beetles?

Look at all your dried food to find where the beetles are coming from.

Look for worm-like insects, molting skins or adult beetles.

Pay attention to areas where food crumbs collect.

Clean cracks and crevices, using a vacuum.

Throw out the vacuum bag when done.

If you have a particularly stubborn beetle infestation, there are several insecticides that you

can use. Silica aerogel and diatomaceous earth are considered environmentally friendly. More traditional insecticides include those containing pyrethrin and propoxur. Cover the shelves with wax paper once the chemical has dried. Read label directions carefully before using any insecticide.

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## SILVERFISH

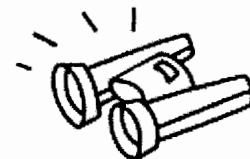


### Elimination/Prevention

Long, flat silver-grey body  
Broad at head and more narrow at rear  
Move quickly  
Prefer damp, warm areas  
Active at night  
Contaminate food  
Seal areas of entry.  
Eliminate dampness.



If you have a good idea or tried and true home remedy for pest control, let us know.



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