



PEST MANAGEMENT



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FLORIDA
(305) 594-4767

NEW YORK
(718) 931-8110

1-877-ASK-TORO

www.TOROPEST.COM
info@TOROPEST.COM

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The Pest Bulletin

Ant Season is Upon Us!



year-round, but during the months ahead ant colonies will start growing larger as each week passes.

Ant problems continue to be the #1 pest problem in the country, with more households complaining about them than

Every year we hear stories about huge numbers of ants invading buildings. As ant experts, we are never surprised by these stories. The fact is, ants are a problem

any other pest. They are almost a universal problem, partly because there are so many different kinds of ants. While some species nest outdoors, many others will bring their entire colony indoors. They are quite adept at finding a way inside!

Ants coming inside may have already established an indoor nest, or they are looking for food or moisture. Scout ants quickly alert the colony when they have found a good food source. Ants have definite food preferences. Some are sweet-eating ants, others look for high-protein foods, or oils, grease, and fats, and many will switch, depending on the colony needs, from sweets to proteins

within just a few hours.

Killing the ants you see is useless. The queens produce eggs faster than you can pick off the workers. All the colonies need to be controlled; how we do that depends on which ant species you have.

Call us if you have ant problems. You can also give this newsletter to a friend or neighbor who has ant problems. They can call us for an appointment and be rid of these persistent invaders. They'll thank you!



Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Look at trees and shrubs close to your home, and prune back any branches that have grown within 6 feet of your walls or roof. This helps prevent roof rats, mice, squirrels, and raccoons from gaining entry to your roof area. These pests often find or create openings, and build nests inside attics and other areas.

Termites Swarming Soon

Within the next few months, a big event will happen in the life of millions of termite colonies—they will begin to swarm in our area.

Why is that so important? There are two reasons. First, this is the first sign many homeowners see that tells them their home is infested with termites. Seeing termite swarmer acts as a "wake-up" call, alerting them to take action and call us for a professional inspection. Second, unlike wingless worker termites that can't reproduce, winged termite swarmer mate and start new colonies. And many of these swarmer, or "reproductives," as they are sometimes called, will start new colonies within several blocks of where they emerged.

Winged termites emerge from mature termite colonies in the hundreds or thousands. Fortunately, most will not

survive to start new colonies—they'll either be eaten by predators, or die from adverse weather conditions.

Often, ant swarmer emerge at about the same time as termite swarmer, so it is important to tell the difference between these two pests, because control methods are very different. We've included a handy drawing that shows differences between winged termites and ants—notice that unlike ants, termite front and rear wings are about the same length, termites have a broad "waist" or middle section, and termite antennae are curved and not sharply bent like ant antennae.

Call us if you see either of these pests in or around your home. We'll conduct a professional inspection, and whichever pest you have, design the best strategy to control them.



Termite

Ant



A New Tick Species in New Jersey

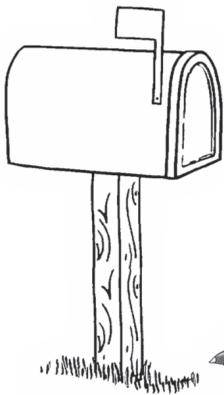
An established population of a tick *never before seen* in the U.S. was discovered last summer in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. The tick (*Haemaphysalis longicornis*) is native to Asia, but has been found in places like New Zealand and Australia on sheep. It is primarily a pest of livestock, but will feed on humans as well.



Health officials have no idea how the tick got here. The ticks were so numerous that they crawled up the pant legs of the people walking on the property. The ticks were controlled, but researchers will return to the property this spring to determine if there are still populations, and set traps for wild animals to see if they are infested and may have spread the infestation.

Any such case of a new tick is alarming because they can carry and transmit diseases. It has also been found that birds can become infested with many kinds of ticks, and may spread them long distances along their migration routes.

Rat Steals Mail



Recently a woman in Brooklyn had been complaining that the U.S. Post Office wasn't delivering her mail. She had been getting late notices for bills she never received. It turns out the postal worker tossed the mail onto the woman's porch each day, but before she retrieved it, a rat was dragging some



of it off into its nearby burrow to use as nesting material. The pest management professional who discovered what was happening found *between 30 and 40 pieces of mail*, shredded by the rat, in the nest.

Bed Bug Histamines Persist



A recent study showed that bed bugs emit substantial amounts of histamine that persists even after the bed bugs are eliminated.

The study found that histamine levels in bed bug-infested homes were *at least 20 times higher* than homes with no history of bed bugs. High levels of histamine are in bed bug feces—they use the substance to mark good places to aggregate, near where sleeping humans are, their preferred food.

In humans, histamine is part of our natural immune system. But it can cause inflammation and respiratory problems, and allergies when inhaled, plus rashes when it contacts our skin.

Histamine persists a long time—the researchers discovered high levels of histamine in homes even three months after the bed bugs had been eliminated. In future tests they will look at if histamine levels decrease after both the bed bugs are eliminated, and rigorous cleaning that removes household dust.

Bed bugs have always been thought of as primarily a nuisance pest rather than a medically important pest, but this study supports further evidence that these pests can be both.

Bug Found Embedded in van Gogh Painting

Surprise! A tiny grasshopper was recently discovered embedded in the paint of one of Vincent van Gogh's famous masterpieces, *Olive Trees*.

The small grasshopper was hiding in plain sight on the painting but had never been noticed before. It must have landed in the paint in 1889, while it was still wet. It is well known that Van Gogh liked to paint outdoors. In one letter he wrote to his brother, he spoke of flies landing on his canvases as he was painting, and needing to remove them. Watch for those grasshoppers, too!



Invading Ants Hurt Ecosystems



Many of the most persistent ant pests are not native to this country. Two of these, Argentine ants and red imported fire ants, are well known to drive out less aggressive native ants, often resulting in severe consequences to the ecosystem.

This has been well documented with red imported fire ants, and more recently with Argentine ants. A study showed that the coast horned lizard in California is threatened because the Argentine ant has taken over areas where native harvester ants use to live. Harvester ants are the primary food for the lizard. The lizard won't eat Argentine ants, apparently because they taste bad.

Another study in South Africa showed that native ants bury large seeds of many kinds of native plants. When a fire comes through, these buried seeds germinate and new plants emerge. But when Argentine ants take over, they don't bury plant seeds. Any fire coming through burns most plant seeds that are above ground. There is a *ten-fold drop* in the number of large-seeded plants that germinate after a fire in areas infested by Argentine ants.