

Common Fall Home Invaders

As we continue into the fall season, we experience an increase in several pests that love to find their way into our homes and buildings. These insects are attracted to the solar heat radiating from southern or western-facing roofs and outside walls as well as the warmth radiating from within. This can lead them into attics, exterior wall voids, and spaces around door jams and window frames. These all make perfect overwintering locations, and they stand a good chance of surviving the winter if they remain in these cool, protected locations. However, they often continue to follow the heat gradient into homes. This is accidental and deadly for the insects because the high indoor temperatures cause them to burn through their fat reserves and starve to death.

Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs are often viewed as a nuisance pest, but they are also a serious agronomic pest to our soybeans and field corn as well as a major pest to our ripening fruits and vegetables. Adult stink bugs enter homes and other buildings in the autumn when seeking sheltered sites to overwinter. These stink bugs do not bite humans or pets. When disturbed, they can produce a characteristic pungent acrid odor, hence the name stink bug.

The brown marmorated stink bug can be mechanically barred from homes and buildings by sealing cracks and other openings in buildings. If bugs are entering the living areas of the home, the openings where the insects gain access first should be located and sealed. Typical entry points include cracks and crevices around window and door trim, window-mounted air conditioners, exhaust fans, ceiling fixtures, baseboards, and chimneys. Cracks or openings should be sealed with caulk to prevent entry by stink bugs. Torn window screens should be repaired, and window-mounted air conditioners should be removed well before the winter.

Live and dead stink bugs can be removed from buildings with a vacuum cleaner or shop vac, and the vacuum bag should be promptly removed and discarded. Because these bugs are attracted to light, turning on a single light in a room can allow them to be captured as they approach the light, using a jar or bottle. Trapped bugs can be disposed of by throwing them outside or by placing them in a sealed container in a trash can.

The most recent fall invaders I have noticed are the Multicolored Asian Lady Beetles. They exude a foul-smelling, yellow defensive chemical which will sometimes cause spotting on walls and other surfaces. The Asian Lady Beetle can bite to pierce human skin, and the odor they produce has been known to cause sinus and skin irritations. The Asian Lady Beetle can be found in swarms of thousands and congregate in attics, ceilings, and wall voids, and due to the warmth of the walls, will move around inside these voids and exit into the living areas of the home. Prevention of Asian Lady Beetles is like preventing the stink bugs. Seal up any entry points with caulk and replace any torn window screens as well as remove window air conditioning units. The use of a vacuum is still the most efficient method of collecting beetles in the home. The downfall of this method is that the beetles become agitated and expel the yellow, foul-smelling repellent, which is then circulated into the air by the vacuum exhaust.

A lesser known, but still widespread fall invader is the boxelder bug. The adult boxelder bugs are approximately 1/2 inch in length, dark brown to black in color with conspicuous red to red-orange markings on their backs. Infestations can be prevented or reduced by closing or sealing any openings through which the bugs can enter from the outside. This includes caulking small cracks and holes in the siding, window and door frames, and screening ventilators. Broken doors, windows, and screens should

also be repaired. Do not forget to inspect entryways into attics or crawl spaces as these may serve as staging areas for bugs to infest the remainder of the home later. Boxelder bugs can stain walls, curtains, and other surfaces with their excrement. Once boxelder bugs are found inside the best option is to remove them with a vacuum or a broom and dustpan.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding pests, feel free to contact the local extension office.

Reminders

When getting rid of your pumpkins, you have several options if you do not use any chemicals to preserve or paint your pumpkins. Pumpkins can be chopped up and added to compost. They can be left out for wildlife to eat or fed to your livestock. Be cautious that if you have seeds in your pumpkins, they can overwinter in the soil and grow into a volunteer pumpkin plant. Birds and other animals will gladly eat pumpkin seeds, so you could place them in a platform feeder.

2023 Beginner & Small Farm College for Adams, Brown, Highland, and Clermont Counties is a college designed to help landowners examine ways to increase profits on their small acreage properties. This is open to all new or aspiring farmers, rural landowners, and farm families looking for new ideas. Registration is limited to the first 50 participants. The cost to register is \$100 for the first person and \$75 for each additional person. These series of courses will be from 6:00-9:00 pm on November 30th, December 7th, December 14th, and December 21st. This is a great opportunity to develop realistic expectations for your farm. For further information, please contact your local extension office. Adams County can be reached at 937-544-2339 or stoneking.24@osu.edu