

BED BUGS

A GUIDE FOR UF RESIDENCE HALLS

STAFF AND RESIDENTS

All parties involved in potential bed bug situations must be united in their approach to solving the problem. This guide provides information:

- on **identifying the bed bug problem.**
- **actions required** of residents and Residence Life Staff members including RAs, Hall Directors, and Residence Life Coordinators including methods to prevent the spreading of the problem and proper procedures to have the problem solved as quickly as possible.
- **controlling potential problems.**

Identifying the Problem

The problem of bed bugs is world-wide and will continue to be a problem for some time to come. Bed bugs are primarily a problem for the hospitality industry such as hotels, motels, guest houses, cruise ships, and resorts. The incidences of bed bugs in U.S. college and university residence halls are rare. Bed bug infestation occurs when bed bugs are picked up in infested rooms and carried back to residences in the clothing and luggage of travelers. ***There have been no confirmed cases of bed bugs in UF residence halls at this time.*** There have been reported problems with suspected cases of bed bugs; however, in every case, no bed bugs were found. In most of these cases, the itching and welts students reported were traced to medical issues, not insect problems.

Bed bugs are not as small as most would believe. They are easily visible in their adult form. They are approximately the size of a pencil eraser, red to brown in color, and flat and oval in shape.



A bed bug in the nymph stage (infant) is considerably smaller than the adult. It is approximately the size of a pencil point. The female bed bug will lay 3 to 5 eggs a day, and those eggs hatch in 2 to 3 days. Under ideal conditions, it takes approximately 1 month for the life cycle to go from egg to adult. The nymph will molt (shed its outer skin) 5 times in that month. Each time the nymph is preparing to molt, it requires a blood meal. It utilizes the protein in human blood to grow a new skin. It will normally take about 3 to 5 months for the infestation to become severe enough to become a major problem. Until the number of bites reaches a significant level, most individuals do not become aware of a problem.

An indication that there may be a bed bug infestation is always small blood spots found on bedding. Bed bugs are unable to digest all their blood meals and therefore excrete portions of the undigested blood on the areas where they crawl. Another cause of these small blood spots on bedding is that as bed bugs feed, individuals move around in their beds during sleep and squeeze bed bugs between their bodies and the bedding. This leaves small blood spots. Inspection of the sheets and mattress covers in most instances verifies the presence or absence of bed bugs.



Identifying the bite of a bed bug is difficult. Many times bed bug bites cannot be distinguished from mosquito bites or bites of other small insects. The sites of bites become welts and itch intensely. The itching and welts are caused from the reaction of the body to the saliva from the bed bug's mouth parts. Each individual's reaction to bites is in proportion to the antibodies in his/her blood system. Just as no two individuals react to mosquito bites in the same manner, they will not react to bed bug bites in the same manner. Some individuals' reactions will be quite severe; others will only have a mild or no reaction. The best method of determining if welts and itching are from bed bugs is for the Housing pest control technicians to ask questions about a resident's recent activities and perform an inspection of the room. There are many causes of itching and welts. Some causes may be allergic reactions; stress related medical issues; other outdoor insects (chiggers, fleas, mosquitoes); and socially/sexually transmitted diseases.



Actions Required of RLE Staff

As soon as a problem is suspected, involved residents should notify staff and submit an electronic work request through H.A.W.K. to notify Housing pest control services that there is a potential problem. Housing pest control technicians will respond as rapidly as possible to perform an inspection to determine the problem. The RLE staff role is to insure that Housing pest control technicians are informed in a timely fashion; RLE staff members should not try to diagnose the problem on their own or offer personal opinions on what the problem might be. Housing pest control technicians are well-trained and highly skilled at diagnosing and treating bed bug or other insect problems.

Controlling the Problem

In order to prevent the spread of the problem to other areas or residences during the investigation of the situation and possible treatment, staff and residents must observe these procedures:

- Do not remove bedding or other items to other rooms in an effort to relieve the problem prior to consultation with Housing pest control technicians. This action may cause the spread of the problem to other rooms.
- Do not share clothing or other items with residents in potentially infested rooms or those who may have come into contact with them. Until the problem is identified and solved, all precautions should be taken to insure that the problem remains isolated so it may be adequately treated and solved.
- Remain calm and do not panic! Practice rumor control and confidentiality. Most of these situations are NOT bed bugs, but the other causes may be equally troubling to residents, roommates, and other community members. It normally takes months for a severe infestation to spread to other rooms within the same general area. The probability that the situation is bed bugs is low and the chance the situation has spread is even lower! Housing pest control technicians will evaluate the situation and determine if there is indication that additional inspection and/or treatment is necessary.