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Winterize Your Home from Vector Infestations



It is important for the health of your family and pets to maintain a vector-free living environment. A vector is any animal or insect that can transmit disease to humans, such as mosquitoes, rodents, fleas and ticks. If infected, these vectors can transmit West Nile Virus, Hantavirus, Plague, or Lyme disease to humans and other animals.

Vectors are most active during warm summer months. When the winter comes, vectors seek sheltered environments to stay warm and this could mean that they are seeking refuge in your home. Vectors climb, claw and gnaw to find entry ways into your home which can cause structural damage to roofs, siding, and basements. Rats and squirrels seek warmer climates for building nests. Rodents work at night to gather food and often gnaw on electrical wires, possibly causing home fires.

Signs of vector infestations often go unnoticed until it's too late. Below are some simple tips for preventing vector infestations in your home.

Rodent Control Maintenance

Maintaining your yard plays a large role in keeping your home vector-free. Be sure to trim shrubs, bushes and trees near your house to prevent rodents from climbing the branches and reaching your roof. Squirrels and rats like to gnaw at roof overhangs, shingles, gables, and sections where two roofs meet. Squirrels can even get into the attic through crevices in the chimney.

Outdoor Rodent Control Tips:

- Keep your branches and bushes trimmed back away from the house
- Check for leaking outdoor faucets and pipes
- Don't feed your pet more than it can eat at one time and uneaten pet food should not be left outside after dark.
- Always keep doors closed—rodents are quick!
- Store firewood away from the home
- Empty garbage cans and keep lids closed

Indoor Rodent Control Tips:

- Seal all entryways, cracks, and holes in siding, doors, window screens, and areas around pipes
- Practice good sanitation by cleaning up crumbs and spills
- Store dry food in containers with tight-fitting lids.
- Clean under counter-top appliances and large kitchen appliances.

[Click here](#) for more information about rodents and how to keep them away from your home.

Hantavirus

Did you know that [rodent control](#) in and around the home and camps is the best way to prevent [Hantavirus](#)? Hantavirus infection can lead to Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS), a rare but severe and sometimes fatal respiratory disease in humans. People become infected through contact with Hantavirus-infected rodents or their urine, saliva and droppings. Deer mice, cotton rats, rice rats, and white-footed mice are known to carry Hantavirus, so make sure to keep these critters away from your home! To view tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about how to prevent rodent infestations, [click here](#).

Bed Bugs: A Year-Round Problem



Bed bug. Courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Many insects and vectors thrive during the warm summer months, but bed bugs are active year-round regardless of the weather. Most people don't know that bed bugs can survive for several months without feeding. This makes them particularly resilient because they can wait for a long period of time until they find the next person to feed on.

Bed bug infestations are a result of human habits and **not** human hygiene. Individuals that travel often, accept or find used furniture, or visit many different residences as part of their job should be cautious of bed bugs. Be sure to check for bed bugs around or near areas where you may sleep, which includes hotels, motels, camps, bed and breakfasts, and even your own home. [Click here to download a wallet-sized card](#) you can take when traveling to remind yourself how to inspect a room for bed bugs.

For more information about bed bugs, [click here](#).

Swimming Pool Vector-Risks during the Winter



Pool covers may be installed to keep debris and leaves from filling the pool during the winter months. However, the pool cover becomes an excellent mosquito-breeding area before the pool is reopened in the spring because of the decomposing vegetation that is on the pool cover, the rain that accumulates on the top of the pool cover during the winter, and the eggs laid on the pool cover in early fall and early spring. The cover also provides ideal conditions for mosquitoes to breed: stagnant water, protection from wind that can sink floating eggs, the near absence of predators, and warm water created by the pool cover collecting heat just below the surface.

Remember that green pools can still be a risk during the winter months. Maintenance of swimming pools and spas during the warm months also apply during the winter. [Click here](#) for more information on how to keep your pool and spa safe during the winter and year-round.

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