

# Putting Bugs To Bed



**DNA testing offers an alternative bed-bug detection solution.**

*BY LAUREN BOSTON*

**A**s bed bug infestations continue to affect nearly every city across the country, identifying these elusive critters early on is increasingly essential to providing effective treatment.

The good news is that modern science has revealed a number of advanced detection techniques that can help identify bed bugs quickly and efficiently. One recent advancement is DNA testing.

DNA testing employs DNA swabbing to test an establishment for the presence of bed bugs. Using a foam-tipped tool, pest management professionals can now determine whether bed bugs have been in a room by swabbing key areas for their DNA.

In a bedroom, for example, key areas for DNA swabbing are typically found within a five foot radius of the bed, including the mattress, box spring, headboard, bed frame, hanging pictures, bedside tables and desks. Once DNA has been taken from the target area, it is shipped to a lab for testing. Results typically take between 24 hours and 48 hours and are 99.7 percent accurate in determining whether bed bugs are currently—or have previously been—on the surfaces swabbed.

Areas once infested can still show positive DNA results, according to one pest management provider. Therefore, if the DNA test comes back positive, the pest management company will conduct a thorough visual inspection to confirm evidence of bed bugs.

DNA testing also provides businesses with real data and confirmation of bed bug presence (or lack thereof) on a swabbed surface, meaning management companies can use swabbing to investigate whether resident claims about bed bugs are true. From a liability standpoint, using DNA testing to identify a bed bug presence can help businesses protect their brand.

One pest management provider says DNA testing is still relative-

ly new; fewer than 5 percent of its clients currently use this service to detect bed bug infestations. However, it is typically less expensive than canine inspection, unless the dog is inspecting multiple units in one community. DNA testing is also more technically accurate, although it only provides results for the areas that were swabbed, as opposed to a canine that can cover an entire room.

Bed bug infestations can be difficult to overcome, so it's important to be proactive in the fight against this pest. Work with a pest management professional to establish an appropriate bed bug monitoring and treatment program and discuss whether advanced detection and treatment techniques such as DNA testing are a fit for the community.

## Roach Motel

Although bed bugs, stink bugs, cicadas and mosquitoes have stolen headlines lately, pest management professionals (PMPs) agree that cockroaches remain a constant pest threat. This is especially true in apartment communities, where aging infrastructure, stressed sanitation budgets and moderate climates create conducive environments for cockroaches.

A major step in preventing infestations is sharpening inspection and reporting techniques. When battling cockroaches, a pest control service provides constant diagnostic efforts to determine when and where conditions conducive to cockroach infestation exist. Floor level sanitation, structural faults and storage practices are a few of the conditions that must be continuously monitored.

When planning insecticide treatments, it is crucial to always read and follow the label's directions.

One treatment that is often under-utilized is dust formulations. When applied correctly, they eliminate harborage sites

## Apartment Owners Sued for Bed Bugs

In what might be the nation's first class-action lawsuit brought by apartment residents against apartment owners and managers regarding bed bug damages, hundreds of Des Moines, Iowa, residents may move forward with a suit, the Associated Press reported May 11.



The Iowa Supreme Court said May 10 it was deadlocked, which means Polk County Judge Joel Novak's 2011 ruling certifying class-action status stands because of an Iowa law that says when the Supreme Court is equally divided in opinion, the judgment of a lower court stands affirmed, according to AP reports.

The lawsuit alleges violations of Iowa's consumer protection law and says the apartment managers assured [residents] that the apartments were habitable despite knowing of the bed bug problem. Court documents indicate the residents say their apartments have had bed bugs for years and they have been bitten, scarred and deprived of sleep.

Attorney Jeffrey Lipman, representing many of the elderly residents in the two apartment buildings, said the number of residents to be included in the class-action suit will likely exceed 300, AP reported. Lipman tells *units* Magazine that he expects the trial to occur mid-year 2014 in the Polk County District Court.

The building's owners and managers wanted the court to throw out class-action certification, saying not all of the residents could prove that they had bed bugs in their apartments.

The NAA National Lease program includes an addenda that covers bed bug-related landlord-tenant issues. For information contact Scot Haislip at [scot@naahq.org](mailto:scot@naahq.org).

from continued infestation and are worth the time and effort.

Cockroach baits also have revolutionized cockroach management. Baiting for roaches isn't about setting out gobs of gel or bags of stations. Rather, placing adequate amounts of bait directly into harborage sites or between the areas where cockroaches live or enter, in addition to the spaces where they can find resources and "intercept" them before they become established, is an effective approach.

With the help of a pest control service's strong inspection, diagnostic and communication skills, combined with tactically effective insecticide applications, apartment communities can achieve cockroach-free conditions.

## Stink Bugs

Entomologists are looking to wage war on stink bugs, which, to date, have been heavily concentrated in the Mid-Atlantic region—chiefly Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. Experts expect high infestation this year.

Tracy Leskey, Research Entomologist for the U.S. Agriculture Department, says that in 2012, the population was 60 percent higher than in 2011. "If they survived the winter, we will have many bugs starting in 2013," Leskey says.

Unlike previous years, they will face new weapons designed especially to combat them. USDA scientists and researchers have pinpointed a pheromone that male brown marmorated stink bugs emit while feeding. This pheromone attracts females, other males, and even babies—dubbed "nymphs"—to the meal. The scent has been re-created in a laboratory and has been tested along tree lines, on farms, and in crop fields with specially engineered traps. The bugs have indeed been drawn to the scent and subsequently were exterminated. ■■

**FYI** Thank you to NAA NSC members Orkin and Environmental Science, a division of Bayer CropScience LP, for contributing to this article. For a full list of National Suppliers Council members who provide pest management services, please see page 121.

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