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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2016

Vol 28 • No 1

THE PEST BULLETIN

Pests Survive Adverse Weather

In this *El Nino* year where weather around the country won't be typical, the question arises, "How will this affect household pests?" A common myth is that floods or unusually cold weather eliminates household pests outdoors. But we have seen in the past, that pest populations are surprisingly resilient. Once the weather warms up, the surviving pests are ready to start invading again, sometimes with an apparent vengeance!

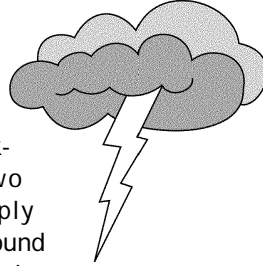
Floods force many pests to flee and spread out to new areas. The decaying organic material that floods leave behind also provides food for population explosions of pests like flies, rodents,

and roaches. Mosquitoes also increase after rains and floods.

Rats and cockroaches are two pests that simply head to higher ground when flooding begins.

Apparently they are able to detect the quick drop in barometric pressure which signals sudden downpours—weather records sometimes show they flee to higher grounds just before flooding actually starts.

It was once thought that flooding



would eradicate termite colonies. But it turns out that termites don't easily drown—they are able to shut down their body processes to reduce oxygen consumption. These are amazing weather survivors!

Not all pests can survive unusual **cold spells**, but some do it with ease. They may burrow into the ground where it is warmer. Many pests, including carpenter ants, survive because their bodies actually produce glycerol, a very effective antifreeze.

Once again, "primitive" insects and rodents are not only equipped to survive, they actually thrive in adverse conditions.

Brown Widow Spiders Are Spreading

When you see a black widow spider in this country, traditionally you are seeing one of four different closely-related widow spiders in the genus *Latrodectus*. In 1935 a new widow spider, the brown widow, probably originally from Africa, was first discovered in Florida. For some reason these spiders have been on the move in recent years. They've now spread far beyond Florida, north to South Carolina, with recent sightings reported in North Carolina and Virginia. They have also spread to areas across the entire Southern U.S., and have become common in Southern California.



widows have become *20 times* more common than black widows.

It seems that when brown widow spiders displace black widows, they can become much more numerous than black widows ever were. They also like to live under patio furniture, and under the curved lips of plastic plant pots and trash receptacles, *exactly where people may place their fingers when moving the item*. This makes spider bites more common.

Brown widow spiders are prolific breeders—each female can produce 20 egg cases in her life, with up to 150 eggs in each egg case. Because the spiders themselves vary in color from tan to dark brown, with black accent markings, the best way to identify a brown widow spider is by their egg cases—they are the only ones with silk spikes, looking somewhat like a WW II harbor mine designed to blow up ships.

This is good and bad news. Brown widow venom, drop for drop, is just as strong as black widow venom, but for some reason their bites tend to be less serious than black widow bites. So where they are displacing black widows, it is a good thing. However, in one survey of urban areas in Southern California, brown

Pest Prevention Tip of the Month

Have piles of paper items? Now is a great time to go through your old magazines, newspapers, catalogs, files, etc., and either throw out, donate, or recycle any you don't need. Lots of papers provide food and hiding places for silverfish and many other pests.



*The offensive pests
plan their attack!*

Thank you for your business and referrals!

Yes! It's OK to S-c-r-e-e-e-a-m!



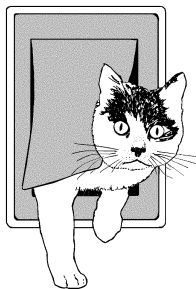
As a dinner guest, have you ever been in the awkward position of spotting a spider, cockroach, or other pest on or near the dinner table? Perhaps in years past, in some situations, the polite

thing would have been to ignore it.

Thank goodness proper etiquette no longer requires us to pretend we don't see it! According to a book titled "Miss Manners," by Judith Martin, you can now shriek loudly, if you so desire.

We must add that proper social etiquette (and friendship) would require you to go one step further—help your hosts solve their problem and avoid any future embarrassment with pests by recommending our services. We'll take care of their problem, and chances are they'll be so glad you told them about us that you will be invited back again real soon—to a bug-free home!

Keep Your Garage Pet-Safe



Garages are common storage areas for pesticides, fertilizers, cleaning agents, and other chemicals. Using our professional services reduces or eliminates the need for many of these products. But there is one common item people often aren't aware of that can be deadly if ingested.

The common antifreeze, *ethylene glycol*, tastes and smells sweet to pets (as well as children), but is deadly if they lap it up. A single teaspoon of regular antifreeze can kill a cat. Clean up any spills immediately, or buy "safe" antifreeze (*propylene glycol*), which is non-toxic for pets and wildlife.

Keep antifreeze and all cleaners, insecticides, etc., in a closed cabinet where curious pets can't get to them and tip them over.

Moths That Drink Blood?

In nature there are many kinds of organisms that drink blood—mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, some flies and gnats, some other insects, leaches, and vampire bats. But vampire moths? It's true—there is a group of moths in the genus *Calyptra* that are known as *vampire moths* because they are capable of drinking blood.



Vampire moths normally pierce fruit to suck the juice, but they will also drink blood from humans. Vampire moths can pierce even the tough hides of animals like elephants and buffalos, so our skin is easy for them to penetrate. Interestingly, only the males drink blood. They have been recorded to continue sucking blood for almost an hour if left undisturbed! Plus, the place where they bite becomes red and sore.

Fortunately, these moths are not found in the Americas, but in parts of Europe and other areas of the world. There is one species of vampire moth here in North America, but unlike its cousins, it apparently does not feed on blood. That's one less pest to be concerned about!

Electric Mosquito Swatter Causes House Fire



In the Philippines, a person swatted a mosquito with one of those electric insect swatters, killing the insect. Unfortunately, the dead mosquito fell on and ignited some firework rocket fuses that were going to be used for the holidays, setting them on fire. The resulting fire

completely burned the house to the ground and injured two of the residents.

These electric insect swatters, available widely in hardware and other stores, have an electrically-charged grid that zaps and kills insects. However, the dead, sometimes still-smoldering insects present a fire hazard people need to be aware of.

Silly Bug Jokes

What do you call a rabbit with beetles all over it?

Bugs Bunny

What did one flea say to the other flea?

Should we walk home, or take a dog?

What game do elephants play with ants?

Squash!

What did the mother grasshopper say to her children?

Hop to it.

What did the judge say when the stinkbug entered the courtroom?

Odor in the court!



Look for more jokes in the next issue.