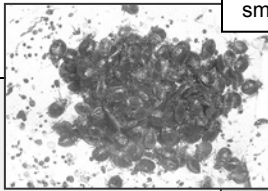
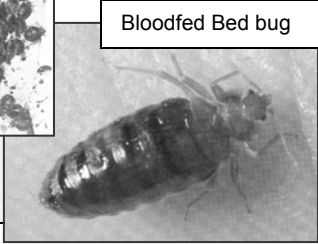


Unfed Bed bug*



Bed bugs and blood smears behind wallpaper



Bloodfed Bed bug

Don't bring'em home!

Bed bugs – the unwanted souvenir from downrange

Bed bugs can hide in almost any small crack, crevice, or narrow space of your baggage and the various items you may bring back from deployment. Although the flat blood-sucking insects are not known as disease carriers, their bites can produce hard itching wheals that are annoying and can become inflamed by scratching. Returning from a deployment with bed bugs can ruin the anticipated family reunion, as well as raise some questions from roommates or fellow soldiers.

Bed Bug Characteristics

Adult bed bugs are reddish-brown to mahogany, with an oval flattened body. Their size ranges from 1/4 to 5/8 inch long. Adults are wingless which makes the typical segmentation of their abdomen visible (see picture). After a blood meal, their body becomes more elongate, swollen, and dull red. Bed bug nymphs look very much like adult bed bugs but are much smaller; they also take blood meals.

How to find them

Besides their noticeable bites (not every person develops a strong skin reaction), the presence of bed bugs may be detected from bloodstained smears on walls (see picture), bedding, mattresses, curtains, wallpaper and other light-colored surfaces. The beginning of an infestation is likely to be located close to the bed bug's host, i.e. on or in the bed. Bed bugs are night-biters and are very shy and wary. They will hide in tufts, seams, and folds of mattresses and daybed covers. If the infestation has persisted for a while, they may also be found behind loose wallpaper, baseboards, window and door casings, pictures and picture moldings, in cracks and crevices of the bed and other furniture, in cracks in plaster, and similar harborage. Very heavy and long-standing infestations can even be recognized by a typical obnoxiously sweet smell.

What to do when you have beg bugs

If you have to stay in a room or quarters infested with bed bugs during deployment, you should take the following precautions when leaving.

1. Tightly enclose all freshly laundered and dried clothing in sealed plastic bags, before storing them in the infested premises.

2. Check all baggage items that may provide bed bug harborage in seams, cracks, crevices, internal voids etc. for any signs of bed bug infestation (see above). Pay extra attention to items that have not been moved for some time.

3. If you find live bed bugs or their signs, use a strong vacuum to remove the insects, eggs (thoroughly, they are glued to the surface!), and nymphs. Put the vacuum bag into a sealed plastic bag when completed.

4. If in doubt whether you have removed all stages of bed bugs from the item by vacuuming alone AND IF THE ITEM IS SUITABLE TO DO SO, enclose the item in a sealed plastic bag, take outside, and inject an insecticide aerosol spray, labeled for this purpose into the bag, strictly following label directions. Leave the item inside the treated bag for at least one hour.

5. Some items may be suitable for heat-treatment. Special care should be taken not to destroy any internal components or to make the item unfit for use after the heat treatment has been completed. A temperature of 55C (131F), maintained in all parts of the item for two hours, will kill all bed bug stages.

6. Make sure you check or treat all transportation containers, suitcases, rucksacks etc. in a similar way for bed bugs.

7. All checking and treatment should be done on the day of departure from the infested premises. If not feasible, you should store your treated baggage in a non-infested area or in sealed plastic bags.

USACHPPMEUR, Entomological Sciences Division
DSN 486-7050 or 486-8801 December 2003

REMEMBER: Bed bugs can hide in almost any narrow space of your baggage – so be thorough!

* All pictures courtesy of Dr. Reiner Pospischil, Bergheim-Fliesteden, Germany