

What to Do About Bed Bugs

Best Defense Requires a Good Team

BY CHERYL BELLACICCO

Housekeeping teams have a full arsenal of tools and products to keep resort villas and common areas in pristine condition. However, no matter how everything may glisten and shine, all temporary lodging destinations face the threat of bed bug infestations. Ongoing team training and education is the best defense for early detection and prevention of large outbreaks and migrations to other villas.

Throughout the centuries, wherever there were humans to feed upon, there have been bed bugs. Today's pesticides are more species-specific, such as those geared toward cockroaches or ants, which do not kill bed bugs. Add to this the increase in international travel over the past several decades, and we have the perfect formula for escalated bed bug populations.

There are many professional methods to treat an outbreak and ensure full eradication—including heat remediation, CO₂ rapid freeze, plant oils, sulfur and boric acid treatments, and even canine detection. If your housekeeping team partners with exterminators for routine inspections, this will help avoid such incidents.

If a bed bug outbreak does happen, however, make sure you have a solid system in place for guest (and potentially media) recovery, indicating your proactive stance and the fact that it is a rare and isolated incident.

Sources

The age, service level, or cleanliness of a resort does not impact the chances of getting bed bugs—it's all about the key carriers. Bed bugs are typically carried into buildings by people in suitcases, clothes, used bedding, and furniture.

Housekeeping teams can play a pivotal role in the battle, since cleanliness deprives the bed bugs of some of their hiding places, thus slowing down the infestation. But once they are in a unit, they can easily spread to other places.

KEY FACTS

BED BUGS:

- Are nocturnal
- Survive by feeding upon the blood of a host animal, preferably human
- Are flat, broad, reddish-brown, wingless, and about a quarter of an inch long
- Have six legs
- Can be seen with the human eye
- Are not known to transmit disease

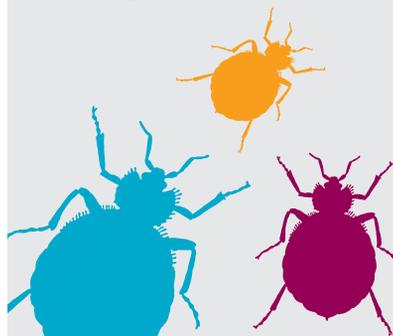
TELL-TALE EVIDENCE:

- Bed bug fecal matter
- Mold-like spots on mattress
- Shed exoskeleton skins
- Tiny white eggs that look like rice
- Blood spots

HIDING SPOTS

In most cases, bed bugs are in a small, concentrated area that is usually within 10-20 feet of mattresses. They love crevices and spots where materials meet to form a gap, so check:

- Seams, creases, tufts, and folds of the mattress and box spring
- Bed frames and head board
- Behind baseboards
- Wooden floorboards and crevices in wooden furniture
- Around door and window casings
- Between flooring and wall components
- Around pipes (water, drain, electrical conduits)
- Furniture upholstery seams and hollow legs
- Under rugs, edges of carpets, drawers
- Behind light switches, electrical outlet plates, cracks in plaster
- In crevices of electronics including TVs, clock radios, and phones
- Behind peeling paint, wallpaper, picture frames, and other dark areas
- Between folds of drapery or curtains



Finding Them

Bed bugs are nocturnal insects that feed only on blood (preferably human). They typically appear at dusk and are active throughout the night until dawn. They will, however, feed during the day when necessary. These bugs are visible to the naked eye and are actually fairly easy to spot, due to their slow movements. You can also smell them—their odor resembles fresh raspberries, moldy shoes, or spoiled raw beef.

To find them, look in dark or dimly lit areas, as they do not like light. Start by examining the mattress, peeling back the bed sheets and running your fingers along the upper and lower seams. Also check the mattress tag and plastic around the edges.

Mattress and pillow covers with zero points of possible entry are critical to prevent infestations—give them fewer places to hide. If any are locked inside the cover, they will eventually die.

If the unit is infested, your pest control partner will exterminate, and dead bed bugs can be vacuumed away. Typically, their eggs are embedded to fabric, so surfaces should also be scraped thoroughly. When vacuuming is completed, dispose of the vacuum bag in a tightly sealed outer bag.

By focusing your housekeeping team on early detection methods and leaving the extermination to your pest control partner, you will ensure that bed bugs are *not* welcome guests at your resort.

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Outaree Hatya, a housekeeper at Parkway International Resort in Orlando, demonstrates bed bug inspection techniques.

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