

Pest control advice sheet

Found a pest? Get the experts in! The council's pest control team have the resources and knowledge to deal with any pest problems quickly and effectively.

To report a problem to us please call 01925 443322 or email contact@warrington.gov.uk

For domestic properties we can provide treatment for ants, wasps, rats, mice, fleas, cockroaches and bedbugs. We also provide a service for commercial premises.

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Ants

Description

The garden ant (also known as a black ant) causes the most common problems in our homes. The black ant is 3.5 to 5 millimetres long and dark brown to black in colour.

Places where they usually nest include:

- Lawns
- Flowerbeds
- Under paving stones
- In walls

The black ant is not a health hazard, but can cause a nuisance.

They enter homes in large numbers through small gaps in masonry, doors and windows to look for sweet foods.

Ants are not just pests, they also feed off insects and act as scavengers in the garden.

Lifecycle

The queen ant lays eggs in late spring. The eggs then hatch into larvae after three or four weeks. The queen brings the larvae for three weeks after which they pupate. From the pupae come the first brood of worker ants, which forage for food and look after new broods.

Winged ants come out between July and August to mate. After mating, the males die and the females shed their wings before digging a cell in the soil where they stay until the following spring.

Home treatment

You can treat ants yourself with crawling insect insecticide, many of which can be bought from local DIY stores and garden centres.

Apply the insecticide to the entrance of the nest and wherever ants have entered your home. Inside your house, check:

- Behind the sink unit
- Skirting boards
- Around doors
- Window frames
- Waste pipes and other pipes

Try to create a band of insecticide over which the ants would have to cross to enter your home. Make sure you also apply the insecticide to small cracks and crevices - as ants can get through very small gaps.

To make sure you completely get rid of the problem, you will need to find their nest. Follow the ant trails and look for small entrance holes in the ground surrounded by small piles of fine earth. Once you have found the nest, follow the instructions on the insecticide about dealing with ants nests.

Please read the label and follow the instructions on any insecticide carefully.

Cockroaches

Description

Cockroaches need to be properly controlled due to:

- Contaminating food with their excrement
- Giving out an unpleasant odour
- Giving many people can allergic skin reactions.

Cockroaches are large insects with 'whip like' antennae and two pairs of wings. The most common

species found in the UK are the Oriental and German cockroaches.

They can come together in large numbers if left unchecked.

Cockroaches like warm and humid conditions like those found in a typical home. This gives them good source of food and shelter.

They are nocturnal and spending the day in places like:

- Sinks
- Drains
- Back of cupboards
- Around fridge motors.

Oriental cockroaches are often found in cooler and places like drains and basements. They can thrive in buildings with service ducts and complex plumbing.

Life Cycle

Oriental Cockroach

The female lays her eggs in a capsule containing up to 16 eggs and carries it to an area where the young can find food. The eggs hatch into small versions of the adults (called 'nymphs') after six to twelve weeks. The nymphs (which look like adults except for lack of wings) take between ten months and two years to grow to adulthood. Adults live for about 18 weeks.

German Cockroach

The egg capsules of German cockroaches contain up to 32 eggs. The female carries the egg case for some time and drops it when the eggs are close to hatching. The nymphs take about 14 weeks to grow into adults and can live for about 34 weeks.

Control

High standards of hygiene can stop cockroaches getting food.

Sealing cracks and crevices, especially in areas where food is prepared, can deny the insects shelter. If you live in a block of properties, the treatment will often need to be completed on a block basis.

Home treatment

You can treat cockroaches yourself using cockroach insecticide. Apply it to areas where cockroaches can shelter like:

- Cracks
- Around refrigerators
- Around washing machines.



You must read and follow the instructions on the product label carefully. However given the significance and the potential extent of cockroach infestations, professional advice and treatment is advised.

Fleas

Description

Adult fleas are classed as parasites and live off warm-blooded animals. Different species of flea live on different animals.

Cat fleas are about 2-3mm size and are brown in colour. They are responsible for most flea infestations.

Fleas have increased in numbers in recent years. This is because more people are keeping pets, and by pet owners not cleaning their pet's bedding properly.

Central heating can give the necessary warmth for fleas to breed, and carpets can give fairly undisturbed environments for flea larvae to develop. Flea bites appear as a tiny dark red spot surrounded by a reddened area which can be very irritating and usually lasts for one or two days.

Life cycle

Flea eggs are about 0.5mm long, pearly-white in colour and are laid on the pet or in its bedding.

Between four and eight eggs are laid after the flea feeds. This means that a single female can produce between 800-1000 eggs during her lifetime.

It takes about one week for the eggs to hatch into larvae. Larvae live in dark, humid places like animal bedding and carpet fluff, feeding on things like adult flea excrement.

At worst, a cat's bedding can support up to 8000 young and 2000 adult fleas. After two to three weeks, the larvae spin cocoons and pupate. They may spend winter like this.

The adult flea will then come out thanks to the vibrations set up by a passing host. Going from egg to adult flea normally takes four weeks but at low temperatures will take much longer.

Home treatment

Regular cleaning removes sites where fleas can breed and helps to control them. Thoroughly clean your home, and remove dirt from all cracks and crevices.

You can use insecticides to treat your home but, before you start, you should thoroughly clean your home with a vacuum cleaner. Placing a small bit of insecticidal dust onto a carpet and vacuuming it up will control any fleas that may get sucked into the vacuum bag. After this treatment, do not vacuum for between seven and ten days.

Pets like cats or dogs should be treated using products, which can be obtained from a local vet.

Always make sure you read and follow the instructions on the product label carefully. Pets' bedding must also be thoroughly cleaned and washed.

Mice

Description

House mice live and breed in houses, buildings and other structures like garden sheds. This gives them somewhere to get food, water and shelter.

Though mice prefer a big supply of food, they can survive on poor of between three and four grams of food a day and no water.

They can climb walls, pipes, cavities and ducting. They have very hard front teeth which can penetrate materials as hard as concrete, lead and aluminium. This can cause expensive damage and even fires when electric cables are damaged.

House mice like to know the area where they live, but this is usually only an area with a radius up to 10 metres. They use the same familiar pathways and produce 'smear marks' by the continual rubbing of their fur against surfaces.

In urban areas, house mice are able to breed throughout the year, and can produce anywhere between 5 and 10 litters - each consisting of about four to eight young.

They can live for more than two years, but the average life span is about 10 months.

House mice feed from many different sites each night. They can feed on almost anything, but generally prefer cereal-based foods such as grass and canary seed

How to prevent infestations

- Do not leave any open food out in the kitchen overnight
- Remove all food and waste spillages straight away
- Empty food waste bins often
- Make sure rubbish doesn't pile up in the garden
- Repair damages the house to prevent mice gaining access to your home (mice can squeeze through gaps in excess of 5mm.)

Signs of infestation

These include:

- Fresh mouse droppings
- Gnawing marks
- Smears

If you notice any of these signs, you must take immediate action to control the problem. You can

treat an infestation of mice yourself, but remove mice bait as soon as the infestation has been controlled.

Rats

Description

Rats are a hazard to public health. They can pass on things like:

- Weil's disease
- Murine typhus
- Salmonella bacteria
- Viruses
- Worms
- Fleas

In an urban environment rats find food from lots of places including:

- Rubbish from commercial kitchens and restaurants
- Household rubbish
- Drains
- Sewers

Rats will burrow into things like:

- Soil
- Compost heaps
- Under paved areas
- Under sheds.

Gas and water pipes are also at risk and rat burrowing can undermine building foundations. They can be found living:

- Inside buildings
- Cavity between walls
- Roof spaces
- Beneath piles of rubbish
- Near water
- Drains and sewers.

Because rats are able to squeeze through small openings, it is sometimes difficult to keep rats out of buildings without some form of rodent proofing being carried out.

Rats continually gnaw. They have very hard front teeth which can penetrate materials as hard as concrete, lead and aluminium. This can result in expensive damage and even fires when electric

cables are damaged. Rats can breed quickly. A healthy female can produce five litters a year, each containing 8-10 young.

Their offspring gain sexual maturity in 8-12 weeks. At any time as many as 30% of females in a population may be pregnant.

It is quite easy for infestations to build up without ever noticing a rat. Their nocturnal habit tends to keep them away from the human contact. If a rat is seen during the day, it is usually an indicator of a sizeable infestation.

Signs of infestation are:

- Droppings
- Gnaw marks
- Runs
- 'Smear marks' produced by the continual rubbing of their fur against surfaces.

How to prevent infestations

- Repair any broken drainpipes and drainage chamber covers
- Empty bins regularly
- Make sure rubbish does not pile up in your garden
- Repair structural defects in the house to prevent rats gaining access to your home
- Place food intended for garden birds on a bird table or feeder, do not place food scraps directly on the ground

If signs of infestation are noticed, take immediate action to control the problem and contact us for treatment.

Wasps

Description

Wasps are beneficial garden insects. They collect insects and larvae to feed developing wasp larvae during the summer months.

Worker wasps will feed on lots of foods including fruit. They collect wood to construct nests which damage wooden fences and garden furniture.

By the end of the summer, the queen wasp stops laying eggs and the workers no longer need to collect food for the young. They become free to search for sweet things like cakes or sweets and can become a nuisance.

Wasps can cause painful stings. People's reactions to these stings can vary considerably from intense pain and swelling round the area of the sting, to a severe allergic reaction (known as anaphylactic shock) which can be life threatening.

Life cycle

The queen wasp lays eggs in the nest and hatch into larvae within a few days. Four to six weeks later, the first generation of workers come out.

These are female wasps that are smaller than the queens. They look after the nest and find food, in particular high protein foods like flies, caterpillars, or spiders.

The queen then spends all her time to laying eggs and by the end of the summer the nest may contain 20,000 or more wasps. In the autumn the new queens and males mate and the fertilised queens search for hibernation sites. When winter comes, the nests die out and are never reused.

Home treatment

Treating wasps nest can be very dangerous. For this reason professional treatment is always advised. If you do try to treat wasp nests yourself wear 'bee keeper' type protective clothing to prevent being stung.

Nests can be found by looking for signs of wasp activity on fine days. You can find the position of the nest by looking for wasps flying either towards or away from a nest. Nests should only be treated with insecticides when activity around the nest is quiet, ideally in the late evening before dusk. You can get puffer packs from garden centres and DIY stores. You should apply insecticide powder around and into the entrance of the nest. Workers returning to the nest become contaminated and carry the insecticide into the nest.

Control is usually achieved within a few hours.

Bed bugs

Description

Bed bugs are flat, oval insects with very short, functionless forewings. The hind wings are absent. Their mouth-parts are used for both piercing and sucking and are normally held under the body. They feed exclusively on blood.

Adult bed bugs are approximately 5mm long, reddish-brown in colour, becoming purple after feeding. They have well developed antennae, prominent simple eyes and clawed feet which enables them to climb rough but not smooth surfaces.

As bed bugs cannot fly, they must either crawl or be passively transported in clothing, or more probably in luggage, furniture, books and other objects used as harbourages. Their ability to withstand many months without feeding increases their chances of surviving such transportation and the very wide distribution throughout the world demonstrates their success. Households, hotels, etc, can be invaded by bed bugs, but it is likely that infestations will only become established in premises with low standards of hygiene. Bed bugs are often associated with poor, crowded and unhygienic conditions.

Life cycle

Female bed bugs lay eggs throughout their life, an unusual feature in insects. They generally



produce 2-3 eggs a day, which are cemented to the surfaces of the harbourages. The nymphs, which emerge from the eggs between 10-20 days later are just over 1mm long and appear very similar to the adults except in size and colour. The speed of development from egg to adult and the duration of adult life vary according to temperatures and availability of food (blood).

With frequent feeding, at normal room temperatures (18-20°C), adults live for 9-18 months, with egg incubation taking 10-20 days and the cycle complete in 9-18 weeks. Under optimum conditions, nymphs feed at about 10-day intervals and the adults weekly. Bed bugs can survive extremes of starvation, and have been known to survive for up to 12 months without feeding.

Home treatment

The standard treatment for infested premises is the application of a residual insecticide. The insecticide is applied to cracks and crevices where bed bugs could be hiding, including the seams of mattresses, bed frames, flooring, skirting boards etc.

When using pesticides always follow the instructions on the label.

It's always advisable to get a professional in cases of bad infestation.

Bees

Description of honeybees

A honeybee is an insect and has a body in three parts, a head, thorax, and an abdomen. It has three pairs of jointed legs, feelers or antennae, and usually two pairs of wings.

It has a hard skeleton that is on the outside of its body (with holes for breathing). It is of a small size (0.02cm to 11.5cm in length), which allows it to reproduce to easily. It will hatch from an egg and undergo metamorphosis as it grows (the insect's body changes from an adult form through a major change in its body tissues).

This very intelligent creature uses the sun and other landmarks to find its way. It can dance to show other bees where to find food. It has special baskets made of stiff curving hairs on its back legs, to carry pollen back to the hive. It also has a sting to defend itself- but when it uses its sting, it dies.

Bees are social insects. They live in colonies with other bees. Each bee works in co-operation with others, for the good of the colony as a whole. They feed on flowers' nectar and pollen, and pollinate (fertilise) at the same time. Bees build a honeycomb nest in which they make honey. They survive the winter by eating stored honey and keeping warm with the other bees. Remember, bees are one of the most important creatures on our planet; we need all the good work they do.

Honeybee hives have long provided humans with honey and beeswax. Such commercial uses have spawned a large beekeeping industry, though many species still occur in the wild.

All honeybees are social and cooperative insects.

A hive's inhabitants are generally divided into three types:

Workers are the only bees that most people ever see. These bees are females that are not sexually developed. Workers forage for food (pollen and nectar from flowers), build and protect the hive,

clean, circulate air by beating their wings, and perform many other societal functions.

The queen's job is simple - laying the eggs that will spawn the hive's next generation of bees. There is usually only a single queen in a hive. If the queen dies, workers will create a new queen by feeding one of the worker females a special diet of a food called "royal jelly." This elixir enables the worker to develop into a fertile queen. Queens also regulate the hive's activities by producing chemicals that guide the behaviour of the other bees.

Male bees are called drones and are the third class of honeybee. Several hundred drones live in each hive during the spring and summer, but they are expelled for the winter months when the hive goes into a lean survival mode.

Bees live on stored honey and pollen all winter, and cluster into a ball to conserve warmth. Larvae are fed from the stores during this season and, by spring, the hive is swarming with a new generation of bees

The bee sucks the nectar out of the flower with her proboscis (tongue) and stores it in a special sack in her body called the honey stomach to be transferred to the honey-making bees in the hive. The honey stomach holds about 4 mg of nectar that is about half the weight of the bee. When the honey stomach is full the bee flies back to the hive. On her way back the bee adds invertase, an enzyme from her body to the collected nectar. This begins the process of changing the nectar into honey. The enzyme breaks the complex plant sugar in the nectar down into simpler and more digestible sugars for the bees, mainly glucose (grape sugar) and fructose (fruit sugar). In the hive, the nectar is delivered to the house bees who store it in the honeycomb cells. The bees in the same colony visit about 4 million flowers to make one kilogram of honey.

Honeybees are beneficial to the environment as they pollinate crops and plants and produce honey, which contains many health properties.

Home treatment

Please note: The council's pest service won't treat honeybees. The pest service destroys all other species of bees, and their hives, using insecticidal dust. We do not remove bees or their hives, alive or dead. Please check the information below to identify whether they are honeybees or not. If you do call out the council's pest service and we identify them as honeybees, you are entitled to a full refund of the fee.

Honeybees are beneficial to the environment as they pollinate crops and plants and produce honey, which contains many health properties. If you have a hive of honeybees you can arrange for a beekeeper to collect them. First of all check that they are definitely honeybees (beekeepers will not deal with any other bee species) on the British Beekeepers Association website then contact a local beekeeper directly - for a list of beekeepers please call or email Contact Warrington.