

Property Manager's Guide to Bed Bugs

In the U.S., bed bugs have become an increasing issue amongst residential and commercial properties. It is essential that landlords and property managers are aware of and well-informed on bed bugs.



grillmaster@bedbugbbq.com



216-820-9166



www.bedbugbbq.com





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In the U.S. bed bugs have become an increasing issue amongst residential and commercial properties. Often found in shelters, senior living homes, apartments, single family homes, hotels, schools, nursing homes, movie theaters, taxis, and public transit, bed bugs do not discriminate on locations of their infestations, which makes *anyone* subject to these pests. The size of an apple seed when an adult, or smaller before fully developed, bed bugs are extremely elusive, mobile and can easily transport from one location to another using clothing, second hand furniture or luggage. They are known to hide in seams of beds, couches, baseboards, outlets, and other small locations ideal for concealment.

Due to their elusive behavior and rapid reproduction habits, bed bugs and their eggs are expensive to completely remove from a home. There are cases in which furniture must be disposed of and multiple treatments of the property are needed. Multi-unit housing complexes, apartments, and homes are often treated repeatedly if they are not treated correctly the first time. Preventative actions must be taken before and after treatments to ensure bed bugs do not return.

Although bed bugs are not a major health threat as they are not known to transmit disease, their bites can cause severe annoyance and discomfort. These discomforts can often lead to anxiety, stress, sleep deprivation and psychological issues. Counties, cities, and states have regulations in place to monitor and control bed bug infestations, such as having a health code stating that landlords must maintain an “insect-free” property. It is recommended that landlords and property managers protect themselves by learning the regulations of their specific county and municipality.

It is essential that landlords and property managers are aware and well informed on bed bug infestations, the best practices for eliminating and controlling bed bugs on their property, and how to keep their tenants informed on preventative measures.

Bed Bug Identification

Features

A careful identification and inspection of bed bugs is essential for bed bug infestation control strategies.

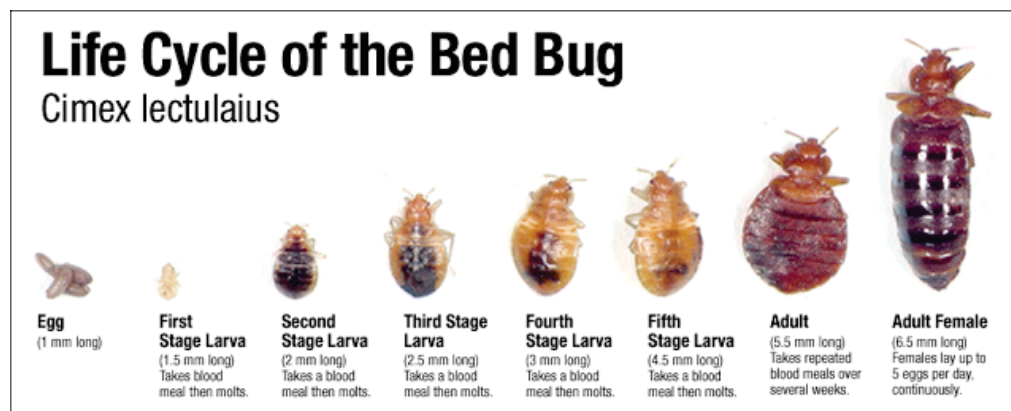
As larva, they are a clear yellowish color and are often the size of a dot created by a marker point. As they grow, nymphs are a bright red color and are slightly larger in size. Adult bed bugs are about 1/4 of an inch and are often compared to the size of an apple seed. Flat, oval, and reddish brown in color, adult bed bugs can also appear red in color after a blood meal.



Features Continued.

Bed bugs typically travel within 5 to 25 feet of their nest at night moving toward body heat and carbon dioxide and they will travel as far as a hundred feet for a blood meal. Within five to ten minutes, every couple of days, bed bugs come out of hiding to feed on their host and return back to their hiding spot; however, there have been many studies that show bed bugs can live weeks to months without a blood meal.

A well-fed female bed bug can lay up to 300 eggs in her lifetime. Taking about 10 days to hatch, bed bug eggs, which are small and whiteish in color and covered in a glue like substance, lay in loose clusters and are found in the central nest of the infestation. This is often on a bedroom mattress because of its proximity to its food source.



Bed Bug Bites

One sign of a bed bug infestation are bed bug bites on skin. Usually, the discovery of a bed bug infestation starts with noticing small, itchy welts on the skin that is typically exposed while sleeping (ex. arms, back, legs, etc.) Often mistaken for mosquito or spider bites, bed bug bites are in clusters and leave what looks like a track or pattern. Note: on average, 50% of people show no reaction to bed bug bites of any kind. This can delay the time it takes for people to understand they have bed bugs.



Signs of Infestation

Bed bug bites, while a serious and noticeable sign of a home being infested with bed bugs, are not the only way to identify an infestation. As the bites continue to occur bed bugs leave behind other signs that they have infected an area.

At night when a bed bug is with its food source a person can roll and crush fed bugs on the mattress. This causes dark reddish blood stains to appear on bed linens. These signs can also be seen in places where residents sit, sleep, or rest.

As nymphs grow through their life stages they will shed or molt their exoskeleton leaving behind a clear yellowish casing. These casings can be found around their nest area.

Signs of an Infestation Continued.

The most obvious and crucial sign of a bed bug infestation is the presence of eggs, nymphs, and adults. You can find bed bugs hiding in the following locations:

- Headboards
- Bed frames
- Under Box Springs
- Mattress Seams
- Behind Baseboards
- Electrical Outlets
- Drawers and Drawer Rails
- Behind and underneath furniture
- Behind electrical covers
- Cracks in furniture
- Under Floor Clutter
- Crevices in floor
- Seams on luggage
- Behind wall hangings
- Couch Seams

Inspecting Your Property



To ensure a home is not infested with bed bugs or beginning to grow a colony you should inspect your property by looking for the signs of an infestation at least once every couple of months. If a tenant travels often to hotels, visits a senior living home, or uses public transit, it is recommended they check for bed bugs on luggage, briefcases and on themselves to ensure they have not brought bed bugs onto the property.

If you or your tenant visits a place where a bed bug infestation is suspected, clothing should be changed as soon as possible after leaving the site, placed in a sealed plastic bag, and later placed in a dryer and dried on the highest level heat possible for at least an hour. Be sure to check your bags, shoes, and clothing before entering a home and use 91% + isopropyl alcohol as needed to spray from the knees down including your shoes.

Prevention

If there are signs of bed bug infestation call a professional pest control company immediately for identification and proper steps for removal.

It does not take long for bed bugs to quickly multiply and settle within a new dwelling, and especially in apartments and multi-unit housing where the population density is higher, infestations can go quickly from an annoyance to a huge issue.

To eliminate bed bugs from a heavily infested property the cost, effort, and energy can be enormous. To prevent and control bed bug infestations property managers and landlords should be well-informed and establish policies for tenants aimed to prevent and control bed bugs from infesting the property. Landlords and property managers should work closely with tenants to educate on how to prevent and recognize an infestation.



Bed Bug Prevention Strategies: Landlord

Policies

- Develop consistent policies, procedures, and protocols for tenants who are moving onto a property while providing information about bed bugs and bed bug prevention. Ensure to educate tenants on bed bugs (prevention, recognition, etc.)
- Ensure the tenant immediately reports an infestation or suspected infestation. This policy should include a timeframe and specific direction on how to report it.

Furniture

- If beds are provided on a property, cover all mattresses and box springs with sealed covers. These covers will work temporarily and will need to be properly maintained with no holes or tears to ensure bed bugs do not quickly infest.
- Ideally, all units that are furnished would include beds with metal frames. Bed bugs have minimal places to hide compared to a wooden frame.
- All upholstered furniture in common areas should be vinyl or metal.

Inspecting and Cleaning

- Common areas should be cleaned and vacuumed on a daily basis, paying attention to furniture and baseboards.
- Maintain records on pest control, cleaning, and sanitation while carrying out routine inspections of all units and common areas on a scheduled basis.

Treatment

Because of their elusive nature, finding all the places a bed bug may be hiding is unmanageable. Hiring a professional will ensure the problem is relieved the first time so treatment does not have to be performed repeatedly. If there is a suspected case of a bed bug infestation the next step is to contact a professional exterminator to rid the property of bed bugs.

There are several different ways to treat a bed bug infestation, including both chemical and non-chemical treatment options. It is important to discuss with your pest control company which method they plan to use. Only heat has been proven to completely eliminate a bed bug infestation including all stages of eggs, nymphs, and adults. If you do not want to use a professional exterminator, there is a "Do-It-Yourself" option which includes purchasing products from your local hardware store.

These products can be economical and claim to be fast-acting but can often damage property, introduce chemicals into your property, and not kill bed bug larva which thus will not kill 100% of your bed bug colony. Although hiring a pest control company may cost more money upfront, to completely relieve the issue the first time, its priceless.



Working with a Pest Control Company

Pest control companies do not have the same methods to eliminate a bed bug infestation. Some exterminators will use chemicals, some are 100% eco-friendly, and others will use a mixture of both. Consider what is right for your property by thinking about those it may be affecting. The elderly, children, and pets may be heavily affected by your choice of treatment method. The most effective eradication method is a bed bug heat treatment, which is the only option that is 100% eco-friendly and guarantees to eradicate all stages of bed bugs in one day, and allow your tenant to keep all of their furniture.

When considering which pest control company to work with, consider how they will approach the issue and in what timeframe. Discuss the responsibilities of both the landlord and the professionals. There must be an agreement on the treatment plan and cost, which they will give you when the company completes their inspection. Cost is most often based on severity of infestation, size of the home or structure, and whether there will have to be repeated treatments. Lastly, always do your part to assist without becoming a burden. Take recommendations and follow advice given by the professionals.

Heat Treatment

Exterminating bed bugs in residential homes should be done by a licensed bed bug eradication professional. Using store bought insecticides will not solve your bed bug problem. Surviving infestations will become worse, spreading throughout your property to other rooms and areas.

When furniture and belongings are treated with chemical products you have to dispose of these items. The heat used by our team at Bed Bug Barbeque, LLC comes from specialized heaters that are equipped with safety devices such as sensors and thermostats to safely heat the target area to an exact range of temperatures. This technique can be used for a single room or an entire home. Heat treatment is especially effective as it can penetrate carpet, furniture, mattresses, ceilings and walls. The heat reaches areas where pesticides cannot be applied. We heat your home to 120-150°F. Treatment time varies on size of structure, content volume and degree of infestation.

Heat eliminates all stages of the bed bug life cycle, so when our treatment is done, the bed bugs and their colonies are all gone!

In one day with a 100% eco-friendly method all of your bed bugs will be removed.

Preparing Your Property for Treatment

Property Managers and tenants will need to work closely with professional exterminators to be sure all responsibilities are carried out. Depending on the type of treatment, instructions will be given to tenants and Property Managers by the professional and there will need to be assurance that these plans and preparations are carried out to properly treat the home. If these directions are not carried out correctly, there would be a greater possibility of a re-infestation.



Cleaning

It may not rid a property of bed bugs, but cleaning and vacuuming will assist in decreasing the spread of an infestation. Before the professionals arrive, tenants or property managers will want to separate items that are completely infested and which need to be disposed of, and others that can be treated. Also consider doing the following:

- Move all furniture at least a foot away from the wall.
- Wash or dry items that are salvageable items at a minimum of 140°F for at least 40 minutes (20 minutes each).
- Dispose of completely infested furniture items - this may be included in your extermination service day of treatment. If removing items from the infested home, take measures to ensure that such items are properly bagged or enclosed before moving to prevent infestation of other places or areas such as vehicles, storage units, etc.
- After you are finished vacuuming and cleaning the entire home, clean the vacuum by emptying container into a garbage bag, seal it, and throw it away outside in the trash can.

Accommodations

- Make arrangements that allow for tenants to be out of their homes during treatment. This could take between 4-10 hours.
- If tenants have any medical or mobility needs, ensure they have accommodations during the treatment time.
- All pets and plants will need to be removed from the property.
- Determine how to properly dispose of any infested furniture items. You should not take your furniture to a second-hand store or sell it. This may be a good moment to contact the city trash service and follow any regulations and policies already set in place.

Landlord FAQs

What do I do if my tenants suspect they have a bed bug infestation?

Immediately call and schedule an inspection with Bed Bug Barbecue, LLC. We will be able to readily assess the situation and give further steps if needed.

Who should pay for the treatment? The landlord or tenant?

This could depend on when the infestation happened. If the infestation was identified before the tenants moved in, the landlord should consider paying for the treatment. If the cause and date are unknown, typically the treatment cost is split between the landlord and tenant.

How should I educate my tenants about bed bugs?

To promote awareness and facilitate communication we provide a "Tenant's Guide to Bed Bugs" that can easily be downloaded, printed, and given to tenants. We recommend including this document with all leasing information packets.



Bed Bug Information for Property Managers



For more information about Bed Bugs or if you think you're suffering from an infestation call

216-820-9166

Bed Bug Barbecue, LLC is a limited liability corporation.

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