

URBAN PEST NEWS

Agent Notes

Drought conditions occurring across Texas hasn't gotten rid of red imported fire ants as many people think. When weather is dry, fire ants go deeper into the ground, popping back to the top once it rains. People who irrigate their lawn may continue to have problems with fire ants even when there hasn't been a lot of rain. Irrigated areas create a good area for fire ants to live.

Rover Ants

Rover ants have taken over numerous areas around the outside of my home. It's fun for me to watch these cute little ants trailing, but most homeowners do not share my sentimental attachment and consider them a nuisance.

Rover ants, *Brachymyrmex* spp., are tiny (1.5-2 mm), blackish-brown ants. They have one node that is usually covered by the base of the gaster and no stinger. These ants have 9 segmented antennae.

Rover ants can often be seen running excitedly around and up vertical surfaces such as lawn furniture or fence posts. Common nesting locations include potted plants, under stones or in rotting wood.

Management strategies should be targeted to nest locations and trails. Chemicals labeled for rover ants or ants may be used.



Photo from University of Florida

Rover ants are common in Texas, Florida, Louisiana, California and parts of Alabama and Mississippi.

IPM- Exclusion Tips

Arthropods need a warm habitat to survive the winter and homes can be a good place for them to pass the time. They have several mechanisms to help them survive cold conditions such as hiding behavior that typically occurs in the autumn and often leads them indoors to live with us.

Insects survive the winter by reducing their body's water content and producing glycerol (similar to your car's antifreeze) which "winterize" their body.

Exclusion techniques can help reduce the number of pests that move indoors. Encourage your customers to use exclusion techniques by providing them with a list of things they can easily accomplish to help reduce pest problems or use exclusion as an add on service!

Exclusion can include such things as:

- ♦ trimming tree branches that overhang or touch the roof- branches can create a bridge that pests can use to enter the structure
- ♦ stuffing weepholes with steel wool or copper mesh- pesticidal dust may be puffed into weepholes before stuffing it with steel wool
- ♦ replacing weather stripping on doors & windows as needed- if you can see daylight around the door when it is closed, weather stripping should be replaced
- ♦ using caulk or expanding foam to seal pipe penetrations or cracks & crevices
- ♦ using hardware cloth to seal vents/ openings in the attics, soffits or eaves
- ♦ turning off lights at night or using yellow bulbs



Scorpions

Scorpions are arachnids with four pairs of legs, a pair of pincers (pedipalps) and a long tail ending with a stinger (telson). The striped bark scorpion is the most common scorpion found in Texas. This species is about 2 1/2" long, yellowish-tan with two dark stripes running the length of its back.

Striped bark scorpions are commonly found under rocks, bark and debris as well as inside homes. They can often be a morning pick me up when you find them in

Scorpions give birth to live young.

While the babies are tiny, they are still capable of stinging.

the shower. They are also capable of climbing trees and walls.

Scorpions are predaceous on other arthropods including insects, spiders, centipedes and other scorpions. Scorpions hold captured prey in it's pincers and draw it into their mouth for consumption. Sometimes scorpions sting prey to paralyze it before feeding.

Scorpions will sting humans if disturbed. Most people have moderate reactions to the scorpions found in Texas, although allergic reactions may occur. Someone who is stung by a scorpion should be monitored. If swelling or pain persists or breathing difficulties occur, seek medical attention.



Along with exclusion, foundations can be treated to help reduce the number of scorpions moving indoors. Try using a microencapsulated or wettable powder chemical on foundations; it may help the chemical to stay on the surface of the cement instead of being drawn into the porous surface.



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Crickets

Field crickets are a common sight around homes and commercial buildings in the autumn. Large outbreaks usually occur following a dry spring and summer. These insects are about 1" long, dark brown to black with large hind legs used for jumping. Female field crickets have a large sword-like structure, the ovipositor, which is used to deposit eggs, protruding from the tip of the abdomen.

Crickets feed on plant material as well as other insects. Field crickets overwinter in the egg stage. Eggs laid in the fall stay deep in the soil during the winter and hatch the following spring.

Field crickets are primarily outdoor insects, but may occasionally venture indoors. When crickets do come indoors, they may "bug" occupants with their chirping.

Cricket management is more easily accomplished in the summer when nymphs, who cannot fly, are present. Unfortunately, this isn't usually when you receive calls about crickets from customers. To manage crickets, try perimeter sprays using active ingredients such as carbaryl, cyfluthrin, permethrin or bifenthrin. Baits are also available with active ingredients like hydramethylnon, orthoboric acid or propoxur.

Tips for your customers:

- turn off lights at night or use yellow bulbs
- seal cracks & crevices with caulk
- remove debris that is stacked near the structure
- keep lawn and surrounding areas mowed
- stuff weepholes with steel wool

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