



## Bedbug Awareness Training

Before the 1950s bedbugs were a common pest but the development of insecticides made them a thing of the past. Our modern lifestyle, however, is helping them make a comeback. OBPC is offering training to help staff in the hospitality industry, institutions, and rental markets identify the signs before they become a costly and, potentially, litigious infestation.

### **What are Bedbugs?**

Bedbugs are a small parasitic insect which require regular blood feeds to survive and complete their lifecycle. Whilst they will feed from some animals they are mostly associated with people and unfortunately we are their preferred hosts. and hence the old saying 'Night, night sleep tight. Don't let the bedbugs bite.'

### **Why are they a problem?**

Bedbugs were to a large extent eradicated within the UK, Europe and America during the 1950s when many buildings were demolished and replaced as part of the post war regeneration. Another factor was the introduction of new insecticides which were used in the treatment of bedbugs. These new compounds were highly effective in bringing them under control and eradicating them. The process was so effective that most people today have never encountered bedbugs and most people have very little knowledge or awareness of them.

Unfortunately, our centrally heated homes with modern construction methods and life styles are ideal for this type of pest to re-establish themselves and thrive. Scientific research has also shown that they have developed a resistance to some of the insecticides previously used in their control.

As a direct result, bedbugs are now making a significant resurgence worldwide. They are regarded as one of the most difficult pests for pest control companies to control once they become established in premises. So much so that

a number of local councils or even pest control companies decline to undertake treatments.

### **What is the difference between activity and infestation?**

Activity occurs when an individual bug enters a premises or when low numbers are first introduced. If the signs are recognised and treated at an early stage successful treatments can be achieved by trained pest controllers using a variety of methods before the population becomes established.

Infestation occurs once bedbug numbers begin to rise and a breeding population begins to escalate. This can happen very quickly in ideal conditions such as modern centrally heated properties where temperatures are constant and aid their lifecycle.

We generally associate infestations with run down, deprived areas. Whilst this may be true in the case of heavy infestations where the early stages are left untreated, but often through failed attempts at treatment by people trying to deal with the pest themselves. Far from solving the problem, this can cause the bedbugs to disperse over larger areas of the building making subsequent treatment more difficult and costly.

*Activity can occur anywhere and at any time.*

### **How are they spread?**

Bedbugs are wingless, crawling insects and cannot travel substantial distances without the assistance of humans. They are becoming increasingly associated with travel and the hospitality industry. As such, a well-travelled business executive is, if anything, more likely to encounter bed bugs than someone who 'holidays at home.'

Hitching a lift on luggage remains possibly the most common method of bedbugs gaining entry to premises. However, they also regularly enter homes on second hand furniture and have also been known to transfer from one host to another on public transport or the work environment.

Once inside the building they will normally blunder about until they find a suitable host to feed on. This is normally within a bedroom and hence the name, however they will also take up residence in other parts of the premises. Even within bedrooms, their favoured harbourage point may not be on the bed itself but could well be elsewhere within the room, moving to the bed only to feed and then returning to a small dark crack or crevice to breed, lay eggs or digest its meal.

Once inside a building they are easily able to enter adjoining premises as the population becomes established. This can result in adjoining rooms, flats or terraced houses becoming infested.

### **Who Would Benefit from Bedbug Awareness Training?**

Whilst bedbugs are still relatively uncommon, there is little doubt that they are on the increase. Their spread can be reduced or prevented by an awareness of the problem coupled with early intervention if their presence is suspected.

Certain businesses are clearly at a higher risk than others so our initial efforts are focused towards the hotel industry and the rental property market. University campuses, hospitals, care homes or any other business with a residential element may also benefit.

### **What does training involve?**

Training for the **hotel industry** is directed primarily at Housekeeping staff involved in the day to day cleaning of rooms and dealing with changes of bed linen between guests. It is intended to ensure that all staff engaged in such duties are able to detect early signs of bedbug activity and are aware of what actions should be taken if bedbugs are suspected as being present.

### **How we can help**

If you are worried about bedbug infection, give us a call now and we can talk through all the issues involved. Training only takes a short time and can save you £££s. Bite the bugs before they bite you! Call: 01494 581803 or 07581 574593

Training in this sector also covers best practice to ensure that bedbugs are not transferred from room to room during Housekeeping procedures. It includes all laundry procedures and dealing with items left in rooms by guests upon departure.

The training is intended to ensure that day to day activities are correctly recorded to show 'due diligence' should any guests complain of being bitten whilst on the premises. This significantly reduces the possibility of civil litigation and the resulting bad publicity or loss of trade.

Training for the **rental market** is aimed primarily at inventory clerks and any company concerned in pre-tenancy cleans. The training is designed to ensure that these staff are able to detect early signs of bedbug activity and that they are aware of what actions should be taken if bedbugs are suspected of being present.

Correct action by staff between tenancies can go a long way to establish not only how, but when the bedbugs entered the premises. It also ensures that cleaning staff do not inadvertently aid in the spread of the bedbugs either within the premises itself or to subsequent premises. It is also designed to reduce the possibility of them transferring bedbugs to their own homes.

Accurate examination and early intervention between tenancies should, if correctly documented, also establish liability for the treatment which can be costly. This is especially so once a new tenant has taken up residence.

In a recent case where it was evident that the infestation was well established during the previous tenancy, the new tenant's personal effects subsequently became infested. This resulted in the disposal, treatment or specialist cleaning of numerous items. The landlord was also obliged to pay for hotel accommodation for the duration of the treatment. The outgoing tenant's deposit had been returned and this resulted in a substantial financial loss to the landlord.

The financial loss could have been significantly reduced had procedures contained within this training package been implemented.