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August 9, 2009

NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

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Brown Recluse Spiders

The most dreaded household pests in Texas is the brown recluse spider. Unfortunately, the bad reputation of this spider is well deserved, for the bite of brown recluse can be painful and may result in disfiguring skin ulcers, severe pain, and, occasionally, life-threatening complications.

As its name implies, the brown recluse is shy and not naturally aggressive. It is most often found in sites that are rarely disturbed, such as under old boards, in piles of discarded junk, and in seldom-disturbed storage spaces in houses and outbuildings. Indoors, they are most common in cluttered closets, garages, crawl-spaces, and attics.

Brown recluse spiders are hunting spiders and do not seem to spend a great deal of time on webs. When webs are constructed, they are large and of irregular construction, with thick, sticky threads. Nests serve as a site to lay eggs, and as a retreat. They are usually constructed in dark, out-of-the-way corners. Brown recluse spiders are mostly nocturnal, coming out at night to hunt for their insect prey.

The brown recluse is easy to identify. Look for a light brown spider, with slender legs extending over an area about the size of a quarter to a half-dollar. Two characteristics that help distinguish this spider from similar species include the dark violin-shaped marking on the back of the front portion of the body, and the semicircular, paired arrangement of the six eyes.

Adult brown recluse spiders are most frequently seen during the spring months.

Because of the seriousness of a brown recluse bite, the best solution to a household infestation of these spiders is to hire a professional pest control company.

The brown recluse is difficult to control. A combination of chemical treatments and vigorous sanitation measures are usually required to significantly reduce or eliminate a well-entrenched brown recluse infestation.

Unnecessary clutter should be eliminated, spider webs removed from interior and exterior areas, and a thorough vacuuming should be undertaken around, under, and behind furniture. Brown recluse spiders are frequently found in and around boxes stored in closets and attics. Boxes in such places should be taped shut to eliminate potential nesting sites. These actions are best done before your pest control operator comes to treat.

Liquid insecticide sprays should be applied to the exterior foundation, eaves, closets, storage areas, and rugs, if necessary. Sprays with residual killing activity should be selected.

Insecticidal dusts should be applied in wall voids, attics, and inaccessible crawl spaces. Dusts penetrate places that cannot be reached by sprays, and often provide longer control. Avoid contaminating belongings in storage areas by covering them with a plastic tarp before you treat.

An ultra-low volume (ULV) or aerosol treatment with pyrethrins or resmethrin is the final step in a complete spider control program. Alone, ULV treatments are not very effective in controlling spiders; however they will kill any exposed spiders and encourage others to move and contact surfaces treated with residual sprays and dusts.

Additional information, including recommended insecticides is available at the Texas AgriLife Extension Service - Gregg County office at 903/236-8429

Dennis Smith can be contacted at the Gregg County Extension Office by e-mail at dg-smith@tamu.edu or telephone at: 903-236-8429.

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