

OSHN Shared Services Project

Housing Provider Educational Material: Pest Infestations

This document is meant to help housing providers when communicating with tenants regarding pest infestations and how the situation is handled.

It is OSHN's intent that this list will help housing providers to manage pests more efficiently, resulting in fewer infestations, fewer treatments, and ultimately fewer costs.

Key Messages to Tenants

- There are no repercussions for having pests in your unit as long as they inform the housing provider and allow for treatment. This is a common occurrence.
- Treatment of the pests will be done at no cost to the tenant. The housing provider will cover the cost of treatment.
- Please always tell your housing provider if there are signs of pests. It's best to catch them early.
- To avoid bringing bed bugs into the building, be cautious of where you sit in places outside of your unit if you are unsure of the risk that there may be bed bugs present. Bed bugs can hide in wood and fabric and they can be difficult to spot.

Bed Bugs

- Bed bugs can spread from place to place by hiding in items like backpacks, clothes, mattresses, furniture, bedding, laptops, or even wheelchairs.
- Throwing away items will not solve the problem. Proper treatment is needed.
- Take caution when obtaining second-hand or used furniture, as there could be a risk of infestation and possibly bringing bed bugs into your unit. Consider having the furniture sprayed first.
- Second-hand clothing, linens or curtains should immediately be washed in hot water and placed in a dryer at high heat for about 30 minutes. This will kill any bed bugs and eggs.
- Units need to be properly prepared for treatment to be effective. If tenants need assistance to prepare their unit, this service can be purchased from the social enterprise, Causeway (gesnard@causewayworkcentre.org).
- Vacuum bed frames, headboards, and around any areas where there are screws or cracks. Fill any cracks or holes with caulking to keep bed bugs out of them. Throw away the vacuum contents in a sealed plastic bag and place it in an outdoor garbage can.
- Keep all bed linens away from the ground and avoid using bed skirts as bed bugs will use them to climb into the bed.
- Bed bugs can hide in the seams of mattresses, in box springs, bed frames, cracks in walls, furniture, behind picture frames, along baseboards, inside electrical outlets, and anywhere that provides a dark space for them to hide.
- If you are concerned that you might have bed bugs or know that you have them, please be considerate of others and do not put them at risk. Please do not take offense if a staff member asks you not to sit somewhere, this is only a precaution to prevent the spread of bed bugs.

Cockroaches

- Cockroaches are attracted to food (particularly starchy foods), water, warmth and shelter. They are typically found around sinks, stoves, refrigerators, drains, and cracks. They are most active at night-time.
- Cleanliness is the most important factor in preventing cockroaches. Keep garbage containers with tight-fitting lids and clean them out regularly.
- Avoid keeping unsealed food out in the open, and clean up and crumbs or food spills as soon as possible.

- Vacuuming regularly and decluttering your unit is good practice, as not doing so will create a more favorable environment for cockroaches to hide.

Typical Treatment Procedure

- Traps are laid out for pests and monitored frequently to be aware of any pest activity the moment it happens.
- Activity is noticed from a trap or a tenant contacts the housing provider because they noticed activity in their unit.
- An inspection is done of the area where the activity is noticed and follows a “block” approach.
 - A block approach is when the unit with activity is inspected as well as all of the units surrounding it and continues to move outwards until there is no more activity detected.
 - Some housing providers track this in an excel sheet where each unit is represented as a square.
- The inspection should assess the level of activity. The assessment is recommended to have 3 levels: major cases, ~20 cases, no cases.
- Prior to the use of any chemicals, a number of actions can be taken:
 - Steaming
 - Vacuuming
 - Providing a bed bug cover for the mattress
 - Stripping the unit of linens and bagging them, heat treating the bags, which kills the eggs, and then linens are returned inside of new bags
- Re-inspect the units using the same block strategy.
- If there is still activity, chemical treatments can be used. A contractor should be called at this time.
- The tenant will need to properly prepare their unit in advance of treatment. An information sheet must be provided to the tenant outlining the tasks they need to complete to prepare.
- It is advised that the housing provider check if the unit is adequately prepared **before** the technician arrives. If the unit is not prepared when the technician arrives, the housing provider may be charged for the visit, even though no treatment took place.
- The technician will treat the infected unit(s).
- The unit(s) will need to be treated a second time, two weeks after the first treatment. Again, the housing provider should ensure that the unit is prepared because if not, the first treatment will be in vain.
- The unit(s) should be re-inspected with the block strategy to determine if there is any further activity.
- Repeat steps as required until there is no further pest activity.