



Maintaining the Home

Southwest Insects

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During the warm summer months, the Southwest is home to several common insects, including grasshoppers, mosquitoes and cockroaches. However, there are other types of insects you may see throughout the region, such as centipedes, recluse spiders and scorpions.

Residents are encouraged to do the following to help prevent insect infestation in and around their homes:

- Make sure windows have screens and sweep around windowsills, to prevent spiders from entering the house.
- Remove trash or rubble from around the house.
- Install secure weather stripping throughout the house to prevent scorpions from entering your home.
- Use pesticides and vacuum areas normally undisturbed, such as closets or storage areas. This will eliminate the insects' prey.
- Get rid of standing water around the house to prevent mosquito infestation.
- Clean up standing piles of leaves or grass, which can be welcoming homes for insects such as cockroaches.

Here's a glimpse at some of the insects in our area:

Ants: Ants are common throughout New Mexico and the Rocky Mountain region. There are a variety of types found in the backyard. Although

most ants are considered useful in helping to control other insects, weed seeds and improving soil through nest building, ant populations can become a nuisance. They can forage for food and form nests inside the home. To keep ants out of the home, keep your home clean – eliminate any food or water sources for the ants. Also use insecticides around the exterior foundation to kill foraging worker ants and pour boiling water on any nests to destroy colonies. Clean any ant-infested surfaces with soap and water to remove the chemical trails left by ants to lead them to food.

Black Widow: The black widow spider can be found throughout the Southwest and is distinguishable by a red, hourglass shape on the abdomen. Its webs are messy and crackle when a finger is run through them. This arachnid (spider) has a very painful bite that usually causes flu-like symptoms. Black widows can be found in all areas, especially where moisture is present and light is not.

Butterfly: This nectar-feeding, flying insect can be found throughout the region, including desert, valley and urban areas. They are usually seen flying on calm days and are not poisonous.

Centipede: This night-feeding myriapod has a very painful, slow-healing bite and can be found in the region, usually hiding under rocks, bricks or other damp areas.

Child of the Earth: This nocturnal insect is

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usually found when turning over soil and can be spotted in the valley or on the outer edges of the desert. They are non-venomous but may bite if provoked.

Ladybug: This beetle is considered beneficial because it feeds on plant-damaging insects such as aphids. Ladybugs are commonly found in greener areas, such as gardens, where prey is plentiful.

Millipede: Millipedes are nocturnal myriapods and are not poisonous. They are found mostly on the outer edges of the desert in late summer.

Praying mantis: This non-venomous, carnivorous insect can be found in green areas and throughout the valley. They are considered beneficial because they eat plant-destroying insects.

Recluse spider: This very toxic arachnid's bite can cause tissue death, if not treated immediately. Recluse spiders can be found throughout the Southwest, usually in undisturbed areas, such as storage sheds or closets.

Scorpion: Six different species of scorpions have been identified throughout the region. None of these are considered dangerous, but some scorpions have deadly venom. This night-feeding predator feeds mostly on other insects. Scorpions are commonly found in desert, urban and valley areas.

Vinegarroon: This nocturnal predator emits a vinegar-smelling fluid when provoked or disturbed. This insect is non-venomous and can be found in rangelands or the outer edges of the desert.

Although several insects can be found in the area, following the simple steps above will help prevent an insect infestation in your home.

This material was adapted from the Las Cruces Sun-News article "A Bugs Life: Warmer Weather Brings Out All"; June 7, 2004.

This resource is one in a series on Maintaining the Home which include:

Interior Maintenance

Preventive Home Maintenance Checkup
Make a Basic Toolkit for Simple Home Repairs
Selection and Use of Home Cleaning Products
Discovering the Secrets of Successful Storage

Heating

Furnace Care
Fireplace and Chimney Care

Cooling

Evaporative Cooler
Air Conditioner
Ceiling Fans

Plumbing

Fixing Plugged Sink Drains
How to Unclog a Toilet
Repairing Dripping Faucets

Electrical

How to Set or Reset a Circuit Breaker
How to Replace a Fuse

Appliances

How to Buy an Energy Efficient Home Appliance
Choosing a Water Heater

Maintenance:

Dishwasher Care and Dishwasher Cleaning
Dryer Care and Dryer Cleaning
Freezer Care and Freezer Cleaning
Garbage Disposal Care and Cleaning
Range and Oven Care and Range Cleaning
Refrigerator Care and Refrigerator Cleaning
Small Electrical Appliance Care and Cleaning
Washer Care and Cleaning

Flooring

Buying new carpet
Carpet Care and Cleaning
Wood Floors Care and Cleaning
Ceramic Tile Floors Care and Cleaning
Vinyl Floor Coverings Care and Cleaning

Walls

Selecting and Applying Paint
Wallpaper Selection and Cleaning
Repairing Walls

Furniture

Furnishing Your New Home: Color and Design
Selecting Fabric For Home Furnishings

Exterior Maintenance

Home Exterior

Foundations, Basements and Yards
Exterior Walls, Windows, and Doors

Roof

A Guide To Roofs
Roof Maintenance

Landscaping and Lawn Care

Principles of Xeriscape
Watering Your Lawn

Home Safety

Child-Proofing Your Home
Is Your Home Safe From Fire Hazards?
Smoke Alarms Save Lives
Carbon Monoxide Alarms
Are Your Children Safe From Poisons?
Protecting Yourself Against Burglary

Conservation

Weatherize Your Home
Easy Tips to Save Money and the Planet
How to Stop Air Leaks Around Windows
Energy-Efficient Heating and Cooling
Indoor Water Conservation Tips
Outdoor Water Conservation Tips

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Green Building
Reduce-Reuse-Recycle: Alternatives for Waste Management
Create a home recycling center
Healthy Indoor Air for New Mexico Homes
Dealing with Mold
Household Hazardous Waste
Hazardous Household Substances: Alternatives That Are Relatively Free of Toxic Effects
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Pest Control

Cockroaches and Their Control
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Update your home for a lifetime of living
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Hand Dexterity, Strength and Range of Motion
Cognitive Difficulties
Mobility Impairments, Balance and Coordination

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