

MESSENGER-INQUIRER



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Accidental Invaders Kept Outside with Pest-Proofing **By Annette Meyer Heisdorffer, Ph.D.** **Extension Agent for Horticulture Education – Daviess County**

What are these insects inside my home, and what can I do? This is a common question received as fall approaches. Multicolored Asian lady beetles, brown marmorated stink bugs, boxelder bugs, and fall crickets are among the accidental invaders. These accidental invaders are kept outside by pest-proofing your home.

The multicolored Asian lady beetles are pale yellow-orange to dark orange-red ladybugs with up to 19 black spots on the wing cover and a black “M” behind the head. Some of the beetles may not have spots. These beetles are beneficial outside the home. However, when disturbed, they produce a disagreeable odor and an objectionable yellowish secretion. They overwinter in the home and try to leave in the spring.

Brown marmorated stink bugs accumulate on sides of buildings during warm fall days. This pest was first identified in a home in Daviess County about 11 years ago. During the summer months, it can be a serious pest of many fruit, vegetable, nursery, and field crops. As the population increases, it is first noticed as a mass of insects on the outside of buildings.

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Stink bugs are roundish, shield-backed bugs with five-segmented antennae. Brown marmorated stink bug can be recognized as a relatively large and flattened stink bug. It gets its name from the marbled brown and gray colors on its back. The underside is variable in color but is much lighter than the upper side. To distinguish it from other similar stink bugs such as the brown stink bug, it has two wide, white, banded areas on the antennae. A hand lens can be used to see the bands. The abdomen of the brown marmorated stink bug extends past the wings, exposing light colored 'triangles' past the wing edges. When disturbed, it leaves a cilantro-like odor and a stain after it is crushed. They will overwinter inside the home.

Adult boxelder bugs, also accidental invaders, are elongated, one-half-inch-long insects with sucking mouthparts. They are mostly black with red markings. Three narrow red lines appear on the segment behind the head, one down the center, and one on each side. There is also a thin red inverted "V" located near the middle of the back. The wingless immature, or nymphal, stage has a black head, antennae, and legs. The red abdomen has an orange-yellow stripe and spot down the center of the back.

Boxelder bugs are an insect pest that may be seen in large numbers on warm fall days on tree trunks or branches, or sunning themselves on the south or west sides of buildings. They feed on sap from leaves, twigs, and seeds of boxelders, as well as other members of the maple family. They move into sheltered areas in the fall and remain there during winter.

Fall field crickets hatch from eggs in the spring. By fall, the adults are about 0.5 to 1 inch long. They are normally dark black in color. Males produce the loudest mating call. They look

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for burrows or cracks to make their song even louder. They usually do not survive long in buildings because there is not enough food, and it is too dry for them.

When these accidental invaders find their way into your home, use a vacuum to remove them. Dr. Bessin, University of Kentucky Extension Entomologist, says insecticides are not recommended inside the home to control these pests. He also says you can put a knee-high stocking in the suction tube of the vacuum to decrease the number of vacuum bags needed. Drop the insects into a bucket of soapy water to kill them.

Mechanical exclusion is the best method for reducing the number of insects that get indoors. Cracks as small as 0.125 inches allow some insects to get inside. Seal cracks around windows, doors, siding, utility pipes, behind chimneys, and underneath the wood fascia and other openings with good quality silicone or silicone-latex caulk. Use expandable foam or other suitable material around pipes and wires in the foundation where there may be larger openings. Damaged screens on doors and windows should be repaired or replaced.

Exterior applications of insecticides may offer some minor relief from infestations where the task of completely sealing the exterior is difficult or impossible. Homeowner products containing synthetic pyrethroids as active ingredients are options. Read the label to find the target pest and where it can be used. The label is the law. If appropriate according to the label, apply the pesticide as the insects begin to congregate. These insecticides are broken down by sunlight, so the residual effect will decrease and may not kill the insects beyond several days or a week. Always follow label instructions. Calling a professional to apply the insecticide outdoors may be a good option.

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For more information, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480 or Annette.Heisdorffer@uky.edu. Additional information about pest proofing your home can be found at <https://entomology.ca.uky.edu/files/ef641.pdf>.

Annette's Tip of the Week:

To help control fruit flies, all potential breeding areas including ripening fruits or vegetables must be located, cleaned, and/or eliminated. Then, construct a trap by placing a paper funnel, rolled from a sheet of paper, into a jar baited with a few ounces of cider vinegar or slice of banana.

Ongoing Event:

Owensboro Regional Farmers' Market, located at 1205 Triplett St., is open from 8:00 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays through September and Saturdays through November 1.

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