FAQ: Insect Infestations in College Buildings

Although rare, infestations of human-associated parasites such as bedbugs, lice, and fleas in College residences, offices, or other spaces may occur at any time. This informational FAQ sheet is provided to faculty, staff, and students as an aid in preventing, identifying, and remediating any such infestation.

**Bedbugs** (*Cimicidae lectularius*) are parasites that feed nocturnally while residing in relatively undisturbed bed linens, clothing, and similar materials in close proximity to their food source. As bedbugs only travel by crawling, they must be introduced by direct transfer from one infested item to another; therefore, a thorough examination of any materials being brought into a space, particularly any seams, folds or zippers on same that might provide a hiding place, is the best prevention. Further preventative measures include:

- Washing linens and clothes in hot water and drying with hot air to kill the eggs and nymphs (young).
- Regular cleaning and re-organizing of the space to prevent clutter and reduce potential hiding places.
- Vigilant examination of bed linens, mattresses, bed frames, carpets, furniture, curtains, clothing, and luggage (including bookbags) for evidence of the bugs themselves, or stains left behind by their feeding, defecation, or inadvertent crushing.

While bedbugs do not carry diseases as mosquitoes and ticks do, their feeding will leave large, red, itchy welts on the skin of the legs and arms; if you wake in the morning with such signs, notify Facilities Management immediately.

**Lice** (*Pediculosis capitis, Pediculosis humanis*) are parasites that reside for their entire life cycle on the host’s body. Head lice differ from body lice in that the former lay their eggs (or “nits”) in the scalp and hair, and the latter on associated clothing; in addition, head lice do not typically carry diseases as body lice may. Lice are typically introduced by direct human contact, and are commonly spread in close personal confines such as schools. Evidence of the presence of lice includes topical itching and red welts, particularly on the nape of the neck, and observation of nits on the scalp or in the hair. Preventative measures include regular self-examination for nits, and thorough washing of the body and any potentially exposed clothing. Treatment involves the removal of the lice and nits with a specialized comb or other implements, and topical treatment with medicated de-lousing products.

**Fleas** (*Pulex irritans*) are parasites that reside directly on the body, and lay eggs that may collect in the host’s sleeping area. Fleas travel by jumping and may be introduced by direct or indirect contact with other carriers, including animals such as dogs, cats, and rodents. Evidence of the presence of fleas includes small, hard, red, slightly-raised welts predominantly on the legs and ankles, and associated itching and inflammation. Treatment includes the physical removal of the eggs from the environment, and the use of topical and airborne pesticides on the host and space respectively.

**IF YOU SUSPECT ANY INFESTATION, IMMEDIATELY CONTACT FACILITIES MANAGEMENT AT x3333 (OR IF AFTER HOURS, THE SECURITY OFFICE AT x3314).**

**IF YOU ARE A STUDENT AND SUSPECT ANY OF THE DESCRIBED SKIN CONDITIONS, PLEASE CONTACT HEALTH SERVICES IMMEDIATELY AT x3770.**

**IN THE MEAN Time, DO NOT REMOVE ANY ITEMS FROM THE ROOM Or OFFICE, DO Not RELOCATE YOURSELF TO ANOTHER SPACE, AND DO NOT ATTEMPT TO WASH OR REMEDIATE ANY MATERIALS YOURSELF – ANY OR ALL OF THESE ACTIONS COULD RESULT IN THE FURTHER SPREAD OF THE INFESTATION. THE COLLEGE WILL ENGAGE A PROFESSIONAL CONTRACTOR TO PROVIDE CLEANING SERVICES; YOU MAY NEED TO BE TEMPORARILY RELOCATED UNTIL THE SPACE CAN BE CLEANED.**

**PLEASE CONTACT THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICER (x3763) WITH ANY QUESTIONS.**