

About the Farm

Bed Bugs

Some of their Habits and how to Get Rid of them.

Written for The Western Home Monthly by the Parasitologist of the University of Wisconsin

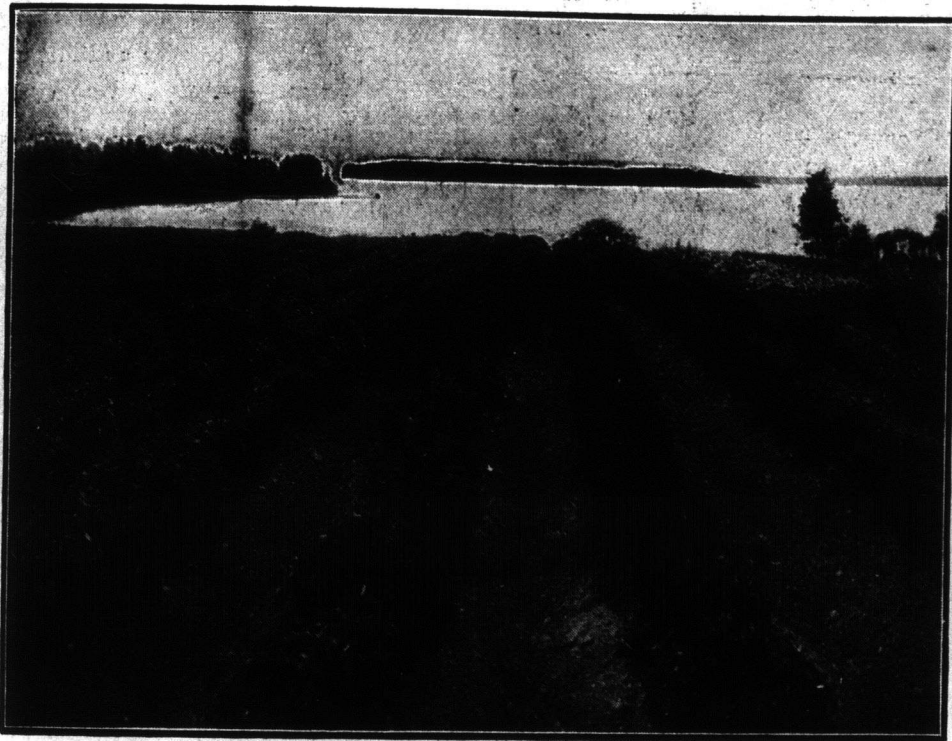
Though several species of bed-bugs may attack man the chief offender is the cosmopolitan, *Cimex lectularius*, which is typically a human parasite. This insect has recently attracted considerable attention among scientific men on account of the discovery that, in addition to its disagreeable blood-sucking habits, it is able to inoculate certain diseases into its victims when it feeds. The species of bed-bugs which live in swallows' nests, on bats, and in other places are specifically distinct and seldom trouble man. On the other hand, chicken houses are sometimes infested with *Cimex lectularius*.

The peculiar odor characteristic of bed-bugs is due to the secretion from a pair of stink glands which open just in front of the middle pair of legs in the adult,

Insects which are so closely associated with man have naturally fallen under suspicion as possible disease carriers. Yet we have as yet comparatively little accurate information in this connection. The bed-bug can transmit bubonic plague and certain South American fevers from one animal to another. It has also been claimed that Oriental sore, tuberculosis, syphilis and typhoid fever may be so carried.

If a house is infested by bed-bugs, it is not necessarily due to neglect or uncleanliness. The pests often migrate from adjacent dwellings, particularly those which are not occupied. They are frequently met with in boat and sleeper berths, and even in the plush seats of day coaches. They may be brought in the laundry or in the clothes of servants.

Chances of infestation are decreased by the use of iron beds and the reduction of hiding places for the bugs. Gasolene, benzene or alcohol squirted into the cracks in beds at regular intervals will usually kill the adult insects, but the treatment should be re-



The farm near Noolki Lake, B.C.

and on the dorsal side of the abdomen in immature insects. Similar glands are to be found in many of the other true bugs. Their use is to make the insects distasteful to other animals, particularly birds.

One female bed-bug kept under observation laid more than one hundred eggs during a period of sixty days. Eggs are usually deposited a few at a time, in cracks and crevices of beds and furniture, under seams of mattresses, under loose wall paper and in similar places. After six to ten days a young bed-bug, or nymph, hatches from each egg. The nymph grows slowly, shedding its skin about every eight days, or five times in all, and feeding between each moult. After this adolescent period it acquires the rudimentary wings which mark him as an adult. The nymphal period varies with fluctuations in temperature, food, and other conditions. Under favorable conditions the bed-bug lives about seventy days as a nymph and feeds nine times, but if food is scarce it may wait a hundred and forty days before becoming mature. Professor Riley of Cornell University has kept unfed nymphs alive in a bottle for seventy-five days.

Adult bed-bugs are remarkable for their longevity. Dufour kept specimens in a bottle without food for a year. Their ability to fast, together with their willingness to feed upon mice, bats, birds, and other small animals, enables them to persist for long periods of time in deserted habitations.

Bed-bugs usually crawl from their hiding-places at night and attack the exposed parts of the bodies of sleeping persons. If undisturbed they feed until their bodies are greatly distended, and are then able to remain in hiding for a long time.

peated frequently for a time to insure the death of all new broods. Riley and Johanssen in their book of Medical Entomology recommend fumigation for severe infestation as follows:

"The simplest and safest method of fumigation is by the use of flowers of sulphur at the rate of two pounds to each one thousand cubic feet of room space. The sulphur should be placed in a pan, a well made in the top of the pile and a little alcohol poured in, to facilitate burning. The whole should be placed in a larger pan and surrounded by water so as to avoid all danger of fire. Windows should be tightly closed, beds, closets and drawers opened and bedding spread out over chairs in order to expose them fully to the fumes. As metal is tarnished by the sulphur fumes, ornaments, clocks, instruments and the like should be removed. When all is ready the sulphur should be fired, the room tightly closed and left for twelve to twenty-four hours. Still more efficient in large houses, or where many hiding places favor bugs, is fumigation with hydrocyanic gas. This is a deadly poison and must be used under rigid precautions. Fumigation with formaldehyde gas, either from liquid or 'solid' formalin, so efficient in the case of contagious diseases, is useless against bed-bugs and most other insects."

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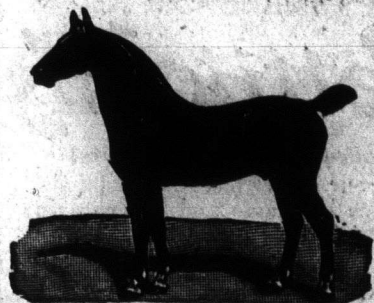
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