Bed Bugs in Baltimore

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BED BUG (*Cimex lectularius*)
Bed Bugs 101

- Small (apple seed size)
- Oval, flattened shape
- Beige - brown – red
- Associated with humans since the beginning of civilization
- Nocturnal & secretive
- Tend to congregate
- Feed on humans
Public health implications

- No evidence of disease transmission (i.e. HIV, Hepatitis) per CDC
- To feed, bed bugs pierce the skin and inject saliva; area may become red and itchy due to an allergic reaction to bed bug saliva which contains anticoagulants and anesthetics
- Nearly painless bite, but reactions differ with some people showing no signs while others may have serious reactions
Mental health impacts due to distress and loss of sleep
Uncontrolled bed bug infestations can cause anemia in young children
Bed bugs may be an asthmagen
Secondary infections from scratching
Global resurgence?

- Globalization, travel, human migration
- War and collapse of governments
- Crumbling infrastructure of many cities
- Higher urban density: more people living in cities, more multiple dwelling homes, more occupants in those homes
- Reduced use of residual insecticides
- Increase in species specific baits
Resurgence in Baltimore

- After a decades-long lull, bed bugs cases surged across U.S. (and in Baltimore) starting around 2006
- 311 calls >90 per month
- Nearly 50% of reported cases are in 21231 and 21224 ZIP codes (Southeast)
BED BUGS IN BALTIMORE

Number of Bedbug Complaints, by Zipcode

Density of Bed Bug Cases Since 2008
With incidence per Zipcode

Number of Bedbug Complaints
- 0 - 6
- 7 - 17
- 18 - 38
- 39 - 80
- 81+

Zipcode
- 0
- 1 - 20
- 21 - 40
- 41 - 60
- 61 - 80
- 81 - 171

Baltimore Medical Systems
Esperanza Center
Healthy Homes & Communities Division
Response

- 2008: Began tracking 311 calls
- 2009: Released initial bed bug response plan and conducted door-to-door education and outreach
- 2010: Inspectors responded to individual calls; conducted inspections and provided education
- 2010: Subsidized professional bed bug treatments in approximately 70 households (using EPA and CDC funds)
BITE BED BUGS BACK! (B^4) INITIATIVE

EPA Funded Initiative

- Community-based approach to bed bugs in Baltimore
- Cost-effective
- IPM-friendly
- Promotes cooperation
- Reduce stigma
Implementation

- Partner with Esperanza Center (EC) and Baltimore Medical System (BMS) to train community leaders and residents to be bed bug trainers
- Motivation and interest are crucial
- EC will focus on Latino outreach
- BMS Highlandtown will host trainings
- Team will set up trainings wherever else possible: schools, churches, community associations, etc.
Methodology

- Goal: facilitate block-level eradictions
- BCHD has technical knowledge; will engage trusted community leaders in reaching citizens
- Stigma hard to overcome
- People must work together, not blame each other

IDEAL: All houses in attached block do same actions simultaneously
Do-it-Yourself Manual

“DIY Manual” will advise residents to:

- Use “climb-up” interceptors on beds and furniture
- Reduce clutter
- Wash and/or dry all clothing on hottest possible setting
- Seal all cracks with caulk
- Vacuum and steam clean all bed bugs/harborage
- Use special covers for mattress and box spring
OUTREACH PROGRAM

- Community forums on bed bugs throughout the fall (kick-off September 29th)
- Education at health fairs Community associations in Southeast
- City Festivals: Latino Fest, AFRAM, etc.

Bedbug numbers swell
City devises public health strategy

July 25, 2010 | By Julie Schaper, The Baltimore Sun

A Southeast Baltimore boy developed a severe leg infection from an untreated allergic reaction to a bite. Al-Kamal engineers threw out his possessions and fled his apartment with only a bag of clothes and a handful of papers. A Mount Vernon woman who struggled for months to rid her home of the pests finally sought therapy to deal with the trauma.

Bedbugs were once a distant remembered nuisance, the stuff of children’s nightmares and Depression-era tales of woe. But increasingly, the tiny pests have become right-wingish bedfellows for homeowners, apartment dwellers and travelers in the Baltimore area and across the country.

“The problem is not just the bugs themselves but the reaction people have to them,” says Chris Merritt, a mayoral fellow who has been assigned to research the vermin for the city’s Health Department. “The things you have to do to get rid of bedbugs are so intrusive. You can’t even come home and relax at night.”
Questions?

For More Information –

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