

Pest Control Advice From SW9

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Household pests such as mice or bed bugs, are a nuisance and a health hazard.

What should you do if you encounter them?

How can you prevent them coming into your home?

Our Pest Control leaflet has some tips to help you keep the pesky pests away.

Bed Bugs

Bed bugs are small insects that feed on human blood. They are usually active at night when people are sleeping. Adult bed bugs have flat rusty-red-coloured oval bodies. Adult bed bugs are about the size of an apple seed, they are big enough to be easily seen, but often hide in cracks in furniture, floors, or walls.

When bed bugs feed, their bodies swell and become brighter red. They can live for several months without feeding on a host.



Bed Bugs

What does a bed bug bite feel and look like?

Most bed bug bites are initially painless, but later turn into large, itchy skin welts. These welts do not have a red spot in the centre as do the bites from fleas.

Are bed bugs dangerous?

Although bed bugs and their bites are a nuisance, they are not known to spread diseases.

How does a home become infested with bed bugs?

In most cases, people carry bed bugs into their homes unknowingly; in infested luggage, furniture, bedding, or clothing. Bed bugs may also travel between apartments through small crevices and cracks in walls and floors.

How do I know if my home is infested with bed bugs?

You may notice itchy skin welts; you may also see the bed bugs themselves, small bloodstains from crushed insects, or dark spots from their droppings. It is often hard to find them because they hide in or near beds, other furniture, and in cracks.

Effective Control Methods

The best way to get rid of bed bugs is to clean, disinfect and eliminate their hiding places. Young bed bugs (nymphs) can live for several months without feeding and the adults for more than a year.

Pest control companies may use a pesticide. Talk with professionals about safe usage of pesticides and ensure your use the least toxic material.

Follow instructions and warnings

There should be advice on staying out of treated rooms and when it is safe to reenter. Treat mattresses and sofas by applying small amounts of pesticides on seams only. Pesticides should never be sprayed on top of mattresses or sofas.

Under **no** circumstances should you discard belongings into communal areas or onto the street as this can spread the issue, causing further infestation that could be costly to eliminate and overbearing to handle.



Carpet Weevil/Carpet Beetle

Carpet beetle, a pervasive household pest known for damaging natural fibres. While adult beetles are often seen on windowsills, the larvae (known as "**woolly bears**") are responsible for the actual damage.



Carpet Weevil/Carpet Beetle

Identification & Signs

Appearance:

Adults are small (2–4mm), oval-shaped, and often mottled with white, yellow, and brown patterns. Larvae are fuzzy, brown, and ribbed.

Damage: They eat irregular, clean holes in wool, silk, leather, and fur. Unlike moths, they do not leave silk webbing.

Location:

Larvae thrive in dark, undisturbed areas like under heavy furniture, along skirting boards, or in bird nests in lofts.

How to Get Rid of Them

Thorough Vacuuming: This is the most critical step. Focus on carpet edges, under furniture, and inside wardrobes. Empty the vacuum immediately into an outside bin to prevent re-infestation.

Heat & Cold Treatment:

Wash infested fabrics at high temperatures (**over 60°C**) or freeze delicate items for at least two weeks at **-18°C**.

Chemical Control:

Use residual insecticides or powders specifically labelled for carpet beetles (e.g., those containing permethrin or deltamethrin) in cracks and crevices.

Natural Remedies:

Diatomaceous earth or a white vinegar solution can be used to kill eggs and deter larvae.

Prevention

Remove old bird or wasp nests from the property, as these are common entry points. Store natural fibre clothing in sealed plastic bags or airtight containers. Inspect cut flowers before bringing them indoors, as adults feed on pollen.

Under **no** circumstances should you discard belongings into communal areas or onto the street as this can spread the issue, causing further infestation that could be costly to eliminate and overbearing to handle.



Cockroaches

Cockroaches are large insects which range in size from 10-23mm. They have a long antennae and two pairs of wings. The German Cockroach is dark brown and smaller than the Oriental cockroach, which is black in colour. The German variety can climb smooth surfaces.

The two most commonly found cockroaches in the UK are:

- **The German Cockroach**
- **The Oriental Cockroach**



Cockroaches

Health risks

Cockroaches can carry food germs on their bodies and are responsible for the spread of diseases such as **dysentery** and **gastro-enteritis**. They will feed on almost anything including faecal matter.

Food contamination will occur when the insect comes in to contact with food, food preparation surfaces or through faecal contamination of foodstuffs.

Life cycle

The female cockroach produces up to eight purse-like egg cases at monthly intervals. The cases can contain up to 30 eggs and nymphs hatch in **2-4 weeks (6-12 weeks for Oriental cockroaches)**. The nymph looks the same as an adult cockroach, only smaller.

Recognising a cockroach problem

You may see their eggs, which are the size and shape of a small kidney bean and brown in colour. You may also notice cockroach faeces, which looks like black pepper.

Where do they like to live?

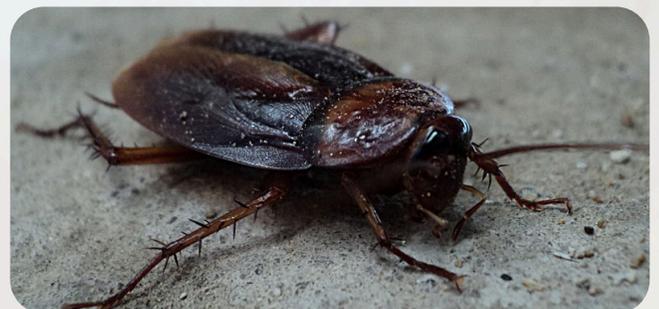
Cockroaches can be found in premises where food is stored or handled. They will spend most of the day hiding in cracks and crevices in a building. They are most active at night and if a light is turned on will scamper away to hide.

Preventative treatment

You can help to prevent infestations by making sure your premises are clean and that there are no food sources or hiding places. Plug all small cracks around skirting boards, cupboards, pipes, sinks and water heaters with latex or silicone sealant. Larger holes will need to be patched. Move debris, firewood and rubbish away from the house and out of kitchens.

Dealing with a cockroach

Professional products and help are required for treating a cockroach infestation.



Feral Cats

Feral cats in the UK are unsocialised, wild-living descendants of domestic cats, often found in colonies. They are legally protected, require specialised care, and are managed through **Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR)** schemes by charities including **Cats Protection** and **Cat Action Trust**. While they avoid humans, they require food, shelter and medical attention in the winter.



Feral Cats

Definition:

Unlike stray cats, feral cats have had little to no human contact and are generally fearful of people.

Population:

There are an estimated 250,000+ unowned cats in UK urban areas, with many more in rural locations.

Management (TNR):

The standard, humane method for controlling populations is **Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR)**. This prevents breeding and manages colony size.

Identification:

They may be "ear-tipped" to show they have already been neutered.

Help and Resources:

If you find a sick or injured feral cat, contact the **RSPCA** or a local vet. Organisations like **Cats Protection** and **Cat Action Trust** can assist with trapping and neutering.

Rehoming:

While often not suitable as household pets, some, particularly kittens, can be tamed or relocated to secure outdoor environments.

Prevention:

Pet cats must be neutered and not allowed to reproduce. Pet permission must be acquired from SW9 Community Housing in order to keep cats. Please refer to **SW9's Pet Policy** for further details.

Feral cats must be referred to organizations like **Cats Protection** and **Cat Action Trust** can assist with trapping and neutering.



Mice

In the UK, mice are one of the most common household pests, particularly during the colder months when they seek warmth and food.

The **house mouse (*Mus musculus*)** is the primary indoor pest, while **field mice** often enter buildings like sheds or garages in winter.

Common Signs of an Infestation

Droppings:

Small, dark, spindle-shaped pellets (3–6mm), often found in kitchen cupboards, under sinks, or in lofts.

Noises:

Scratching or scuttling sounds in walls, ceilings, or under floorboards, especially at night.

Gnaw Marks:

Evidence of chewing on wood, plastic, food packaging, or electrical cables.

Odour:

A distinct, ammonia-like smell from mouse urine, especially in enclosed spaces like lofts or airing cupboards.

Smear Marks:

Dark, greasy marks on walls or skirting boards caused by the oils in their fur.

House Mouse



Field Mouse



Mice

Why They Are a Risk

Mice are more than just a nuisance; they pose significant health and safety hazards.

Disease:

They can spread **Salmonella**, **Listeria**, and **Hantavirus** through their urine and droppings.

Fire Hazard:

Their constant need to gnaw can lead them to chew through electrical wiring, which is a leading cause of house fires.

Property Damage:

They damage insulation, pipes, and structural woodwork to create nesting sites.

Effective Control Methods

Proofing:

Seal any gaps larger than 6mm (about the width of a pencil) using wire wool, cement, or metal mesh. Focus on areas around pipes, vents, and doors.

Sanitation:

Store all dry food and pet food in airtight metal or glass containers. Regularly clean crumbs from under appliances and empty bins frequently.

Traps:

Use **snap traps** along walls or in "pinch points" where activity is noticed. For bait, peanut butter or chocolate is often more effective than cheese.

Professional Help:

For persistent infestations, contact **Lambeth Council** for Pest Control Services or hire an audited member of the **British Pest Control Association (BPCA)**.

House Mouse



Field Mouse



Pharaoh Ants

When pharaoh ant colonies are attacked or disturbed, they respond by "**budding**", a survival mechanism where the colony splits and forms satellite nests in nearby locations, often with a queen. This behaviour, sometimes induced by sprays, significantly complicates control by scattering the colony, making it crucial to avoid knockdown sprays and instead use professional pest control with sterilizing baits that target the queens and prevent further reproduction.



Pharaoh Ants

Colony Budding:

When a pharaoh ant nest is disrupted, especially by the use of repellent insecticides, worker ants can split off from the main colony to establish new, "satellite" nests.

Multiple Queens:

Pharaoh ant colonies typically contain multiple queens, a characteristic that facilitates this budding process, as each new satellite nest can include a queen.

Scattering and Hiding:

This budding allows the ants to spread the infestation across a structure, making nests difficult to find and eliminate.

Why You Shouldn't Use Knockdown Sprays Counterproductive

Spraying pharaoh ant nests or trails is a common but ineffective method that makes the problem worse by panicking the ants and encouraging queens to bud off, increasing the number of nests and spreading the infestation.



Effective Control Methods

Professional Treatment:

Because of the colony's complex structure and budding behaviour, professional pest control is recommended.

Sterilizing Baits:

Professionals use baits containing an **Insect Growth Regulator (IGR)** that sterilizes the queen, preventing her from laying new eggs and halting the colony's growth.

Targeting Queens and Larvae:

These baits work by having workers carry the bait back to the nest to feed the queens and developing larvae, interrupting the natural life cycle.

Long-Term Control:

A complete elimination using this method can take several weeks to months, as the worker ants eventually die off naturally without being replaced.

Inadequate Control:

While sprays may temporarily kill visible ants, they do not address the queen and egg-laying, leading to a continued and possibly larger problem.

Rats

In the UK, rat populations have surged recently, with an estimated **10.5 million to 120 million**, nationwide. This increase is driven by milder winters, poor waste management, and ageing infrastructure that provides easy access points to homes.

Common Species in the UK

Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*):

The most common species found in the UK. It is stocky, blunt-nosed, and lives in sewers, gardens, and under floorboards.

Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*):

Also known as the "ship rat," it is now rare and typically found only in port areas. It is an agile climber that prefers nesting in lofts.



Rats

Signs of an Infestation

Droppings:

Dark, pellet-shaped, and roughly the size of a large grain of rice or an olive (approx. 15mm long).

Gnaw Marks:

Fresh damage on electrical cables, wood, plastic pipes, or food packaging.

Smear Marks:

Greasy, dark rub marks along walls or skirting boards from the oils in their fur.

Noises:

Scurrying, scratching, or grinding sounds, especially at night.

Burrows:

Holes roughly 6-10cm in diameter, often found under sheds or alongside garden walls.

Health & Property Risks

Rats pose significant risks to humans and pets.

Diseases:

They carry pathogens for **Weil's disease (Leptospirosis), Salmonella, Listeria, and Hantavirus.**

Fire Hazards:

Their constant gnawing on electrical insulation is estimated to cause up to 25% of electrical fires in buildings.

Structural Damage:

They can chew through soft metals, concrete, and floorboards, often causing floods by puncturing pipes.



Rats

Effective Control Methods

Waste Management:

Keep bin lids tightly sealed and avoid leaving food out for birds or pets overnight.

Proofing:

Seal any gaps larger than 15mm (roughly the width of a thumb) with wire wool and cement.

Professional Help:

The British Pest Control Association

(BPCA) recommends hiring an accredited professional for persistent infestations, as they have access to professional-grade rodenticides not available to the public.



Care of Your Property

We would highlight the terms and conditions that are contained in your tenancy agreement, which relates to pest control responsibility;

Care of the Property:

You must keep the Property in a reasonable and safe condition and take steps to prevent infestation and condensation. In the case of pest infestation, such as bed bugs, mice, wasps and cockroaches, you are responsible for their eradication and for notifying SW9 of the infestation and the action you have taken. Where we are obliged to carry out this work you will be recharged.

Contact Us

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need further advice or support

Normal Office Opening Hours

Monday	9am - 5pm
Tuesday	10am - 5pm
Wednesday	9am - 5pm
Thursday	9am - 5pm
Friday	9am - 5pm



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