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Pest Check

Crickets Are Back!

This time of year, homeowners begin to complain of cricket's chirping, which becomes annoying at night when trying to sleep. An occasional cricket within the home does not present a serious problem. However they do become a problem when hundreds cluster around lights at night, making outdoor outings unpleasant.

Field cricket adults range in size from 1/2 to 1-1/4 inches in length, black in color, with large hind legs for jumping. The difference between male and female crickets are the male crickets have larger and more vein-patterns on their wings than females. Also, female crickets have long tubes that deposit eggs in the soil. Each female uses her ovipositor to lay between 150 and 400 eggs which overwinter and then hatch in the spring. Crickets go through gradual metamorphosis, where the immature crickets resemble adult crickets, except they are smaller in size. The immatures usually reach adulthood in around 90 days.

Crickets feed on just about anything. They will eat plants, dead insects, seeds, leather, paper and old cloth (especially if the cloth is stained by food or perspiration). They are particularly fond of wool and silk. They also feed on many crop plants. They can damage furniture, rugs and clothing and the "chirping" of adult males can be irritating. They are readily attracted to lights, can fly and are often found around dumpsters. Large swarms may invade well-lighted areas covering streets and the sides of buildings. Outbreaks occur when rainfall follows a period of drought.

Control Measures

Prevention:

Sanitation is the most important means of eliminating nuisance crickets. Keep all areas in and around buildings free of moisture, dense vegetation and weeds. Mow lawns, cut weeds, and clean up garbage collection areas. Remove harborage sites such as piles of bricks, stones, rotting wood and other debris. Caulk and seal all cracks and crevices,

especially near the ground level around windows and doorways. Use sodium vapor yellow lights instead of white, neon or mercury vapor lights.

Never store firewood next to the house foundation. Raise garbage cans off the ground and place them far from buildings, since crickets are attracted to food in these areas.

Insecticides

Heavy cricket migrations are hard to control. It may be necessary to use insecticides both inside and outside the home. Indoors, apply to cracks and crevices, baseboards, in closets, under stairways, around fireplaces, in basements and other hiding places. A can of aerosol household insecticide spray can kill occasional invaders. Outdoors, when populations are large, treat with such products as carbaryl (Sevin) or acephate (Orthene). Before using any insecticide, always read the label and follow directions and safety precautions.

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