



ALLEGHENY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM
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CONTROLLING BED BUGS IN MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING: A GUIDE FOR LANDLORDS

February 2019

In multi-family housing, bed bugs spread by active dispersal between apartments, by bed bug-infested furniture brought into the building, by travel, resident turnover, and by visits from friends & family. Research has found that 53% of apartments that are adjacent to infested apartments are also infested. In addition, half of the interviewed residents who had infestations were unaware of the bed bug problem in their own apartment.¹

Tenants, landlords, and commercial pest control contractors all play important roles in remedying this problem. However, the landlord/housing manager is the only agent capable of organizing a comprehensive bed bug control program. To begin, the landlord should hire a licensed pest control contractor with a proven track record of managing bed bugs in multi-family housing. To keep the problem from spreading throughout a building, the original infested unit and all adjacent units (up, down & both sides) along with common spaces, must be surveyed for evidence of bed bugs.

Landlords should be present to open all units for inspection by the pest control specialist. When given proper access to units, pest control specialists are fairly good at finding evidence of infestation. In large apartment buildings, it may be more cost effective to have all of the units surveyed by a bed bug detection dog. Detection dogs are known to be accurate 95% of the time.² Those identified as positive must be scheduled for treatment. It is important to give advance notice to tenants of planned use of pesticides and keep all records of treatments conducted. As a general rule, units should be inspected for pests after tenants move out and, if necessary, treated before renting to new tenants.

Tenants must be aware and vigilant about bed bugs. They must promptly report infestations and comply with all treatment regimens (clutter removal and sanitation). If a comprehensive plan is implemented that educates tenants and treats infested units, there is a good chance that the bug problem will be controlled. By working towards a resolution, claims of landlord negligence are minimized.

To further educate yourself on managing bed bugs, helpful resources are listed below that give detailed instructions on the control process.

If you have any questions about the intent of this guideline, please call the Housing and Community Environment Program at 412-350-4046.

For more information on bed bugs, go to www.alleghenycounty.us/bedbugs

¹ Changlu Wang, Kurt Saltzmann, Eva Chin, Gary W. Bennett, and Timothy Gibb, "Characteristics of Cimex lectularius (Hemiptera: Cimicidae), Infestation and Dispersal in a High-Rise Apartment Building," *Journal of Economic Entomology* 103 (Feb. 2010): 172-177.

² Richard Cooper, Changlu Wang, and Narinderpal Singh, "Accuracy of Trained Canines for Detecting Bed Bugs (Hemiptera: Cimicidae)," *Journal of Economic Entomology* 107 (Dec. 2014): 2171-2181.

Additional Resources on Bed Bugs:

Guidelines for Prevention and Management of Bed Bugs in Shelters & Group Living Facilities from Cornell University: <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/43862>

What's Working for Bed Bug Control in Multifamily Housing from National Center for Healthy Housing: https://nchh.org/resource-library/report_what's-working-for-bed-bug-control-in-multifamily-housing.pdf

Guide to Bed Bugs from University of Kentucky: <https://entomology.ca.uky.edu/ef636>

Guide to Bed Bugs from North Carolina State University: <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/bedbugs-biology-and-control>

Bed Bug FAQ from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/bedbugs/faqs.html>

Bed Bug Information from the Environmental Protection Agency: <https://www.epa.gov/bedbugs>

It is always the pesticide applicator's responsibility, by law, to read and follow all label directions for any pesticide being used. No endorsement is intended for services mentioned, nor is criticism meant for services not mentioned. The author and the Allegheny County Health Department assume no liability resulting from the use of these recommendations.