



Home Owner's Guide to Indoor Pest Control - A Guide for Structural Pest Control by Homeowners ¹

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The Safest Pest Control Possible Using Integrated Pest Management

Why are there so many insects and other pests in Florida? Blame our subtropical climate. The mild winters, the hot summers, the humidity, ample rainfall and lush flora - together they provide a pest paradise. Most pests live outdoors and we rarely notice them. However, when they move into our homes and businesses, pest control can become a must.

Integrated Pest Management, or IPM, means to prevent or suppress pests without damage to our health, our environment or nontarget organisms. Chemical pesticides are applied only when and where necessary, using the least toxic chemicals available.

There are basically three household IPM steps: Prevention, Identification and Control.

Prevention. Pests generally enter buildings in search of three things: food, water and shelter. Keep areas dry and free of exposed foods, especially sugary foods. Any open food packages should be stored in tightly sealed containers or in a refrigerator.

Other pest prevention measures include:

- Reduce clutter, piled boxes, rolled carpeting, stored paper, etc.
- Empty trash and liners daily.
- Caulk cracks and crevices, which allow pests to enter.
- Trim vegetation that touches a building's exterior.

Identification. Look for pests. None found? Do nothing. If you do see pests or evidence of pests (droppings, gnawed paper, sawdust along baseboards, etc.) you may choose to implement a control measure. Proper identification of the pest(s) is important because your control measure depends on it.

Control. There are many safe pest control products available today, such as insect or rodent traps, Insect Growth Regulators (IGRs), bait stations, repellents and low-toxicity chemical pesticides. Home owners may decide to tackle pest problems themselves or call a professional who practices IPM. Either way, it is wise to become educated about the safest, most effective, long-term control methods.

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Use Pesticides Safely

A pesticide is any substance, natural or manufactured, used to destroy pests. All pesticides sold in stores display important information on their labels, such as ingredients, directions for use, target pests, hazards and precautionary measures. Here are some tips to help you choose the best pesticides:

- Use pesticides only when and where they are needed! No pest problems? No pest control.
- Read the entire pesticide label. Always apply the pesticide according to directions. Make sure it is intended for the target pest(s).
- Of the signal words on the label - Caution, Warning or Danger - Caution is the safest.
- Do not overtreat an area, and don't assume "if this much is good, more is better." It's not.
- Be aware that certain pets such as birds or fish may be very sensitive to some pesticides.

IPM Tips for Household Pests

Ants. Most live outdoors, entering buildings in search of food and water. Some species, such as pharaoh or ghost ants, establish indoor colonies. Proper treatment depends on the type of ant. Bait stations work on some species. A word of caution: Spraying pesticides to kill pharaoh ants causes the colony to divide into several small colonies, aggravating the problem!

Cockroaches. The German species (actually from Asia) and American cockroaches (from Africa) are the only ones to infest buildings. Bait stations work great for these pests.

Fleas. To control these pests you have to go after adults on pets, and larvae and eggs in carpets and pet resting sites. Flea larvae are vulnerable to Insect Growth Regulators (IGRs) and a number of borate products, both of which are earth-friendly. Do not apply borate products to areas where infants crawl. Other flea control tips include vacuuming to remove eggs and feces, washing your pets and their bedding, and using a flea comb. Your veterinarian also can prescribe pet medications that contain IGRs.

Termites. Control of these insects is difficult. It is recommended that you call a pest control professional. IGR bait products for termites have recently become available.

Rodents. Baited snap traps will control rodents, but it's best to prevent them from entering buildings. Rodent-proofing and sanitation are key to rat and mouse control.

- Common household pests:
 - Ants
 - Cockroaches
 - Fleas
 - Rats/Mice
 - Termites
- Safe choices for home pest control
 - Sanitation
 - Caulking / screening
 - Insect Growth Regulators (IGRs)
 - Moisture control
 - Traps
 - Repellents
 - Home remedies