

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**FOR INFORMATION:**

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## STATE OFFICIALS URGE CONSUMER AWARENESS ABOUT BEDBUG INFESTATIONS

TALLAHASSEE -- Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Charles H. Bronson and State Surgeon General Dr. Anna Viamonte-Ros are urging consumers to choose a licensed pest control company to help control breakouts of bedbugs in homes. Efforts by homeowners to treat bedbug infestations rarely succeed, and using the wrong pesticide or using it incorrectly can make you, your family and your pets sick.

Prior to the 1950s, bedbugs were common pests in the United States, but few people know much about them today due to the use of chlorinated pesticides like DDT and lindane, which successfully wiped them out in the past.

However, over the last decade, bed bugs have slowly made a comeback as many of the pesticides of the past can no longer be used. Staying at a hotel, going to the movies, riding in a taxi or spending time in other places where people congregate are now commonplace activities that can spread bedbugs.

Like many states, Florida has recently had an increase in the number of bedbug complaints with people traveling today more than ever, and controlling the pests has proven difficult with pesticides that are available today.

The treatment for bedbugs is a growing cause of concern. They come out at night and are hard to detect. Since they can often remain unnoticed while breeding an even larger population, it can frustrate those having to battle infestations.

“Reports of pesticides and other chemicals being misused in the treatment of bedbugs have made headlines in many states across the nation,” Commissioner Bronson said. “Due to the difficulty in controlling this pest, the public may resort to the use of pesticides in ways that are not in compliance with their label directions and are frankly unsafe.”

As a result, he is urging consumers to choose a licensed pest control company to combat infestations in a home or business.

State Surgeon General Viamonte-Ros agrees:

“Application of pesticides or chemicals by untrained or unlicensed individuals is a primary concern of the Department of Health because misusing pesticides in a desperate attempt to control infestations can lead to harmful exposures in private homes, public housing, workplaces and institutions such as hospitals, nursing homes and schools.”

Avoiding bed bugs and finding them early are important in controlling these pests. The following are a few hints for consumers that are recommended by the University of Florida:

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- \* Choose a licensed pest control company which has experience, knowledge and knows how to manage bedbugs.
- \* Effective control of the pests often takes more than one visit.
- \* Proper fumigation by a pest control company can control bedbugs with a single treatment.
- \* Consumers should know that bedbugs are not known to carry diseases.
- \* Adult bedbugs are the size of an apple seed while immature ones are smaller. They can be found in the seams of bedding and sofas, behind headboards, picture frames, dressers, backpacks and many other places.
- \* Signs of the pest include small brownish-red to purple spotting on infested materials.
- \* Not all people react to bedbug bites so reacting to a bite is not always the best way to determine whether your home is infested by the pests.
- \* De-clutter your home to decrease places where bedbugs can hide.
- \* Use bedbug monitors and traps as an easy, relatively inexpensive way to find bedbug infestations that can help target treatments (<http://bedbugger.com/forum/topic/homemade-bed-barriers-climbup-interceptors>.)
- \* Inspect items before entering the home with them and take precautions against bringing home bed bugs after traveling.
- \* Follow pesticide label guidelines for the use of any registered pesticide.