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Virginia Cooperative Extension



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No. 265
June 30, 1995

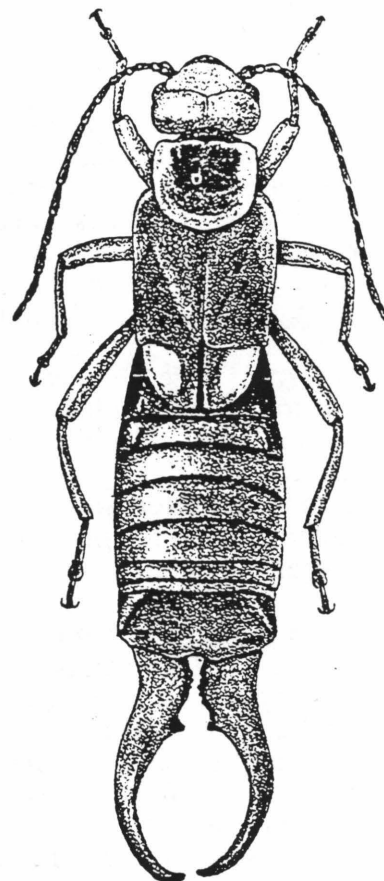


INSECT NOTES

THE EARWIGS ARE BACK

Populations of this insect seem to naturally fluctuate on a three to four year cycle, but local outbreaks may be influenced by available moisture and harborage. In some parts of the state the earwigs have replaced the cicadas in the "pest of the year category. I'm not sure which is worse, but at least cicadas stay outside and don't bite your toes in the shower! And cicadas don't look as threatening as earwigs, but they both can occur in large numbers.

Earwigs are primarily nocturnal animals, they spend the day in moist dark harborages such as under tree bark, under boards and in mulch around the house--under or in almost anything that will provide them a humid environment. Their habit of gathering around door frames provides them a protected place, perhaps access to food, and is responsible for many of them coming into houses. Actually, the habit of staying in a narrow and moist harborage may be exploited for control--remove as much of this as possible, and/or treat under those places that do provide harborage. Most earwigs are attracted to outdoor lights at night, this also brings them to doorways, then to the inside. Changing to a yellow light, or just turning it off may be a great help in reducing the presence of earwigs inside.



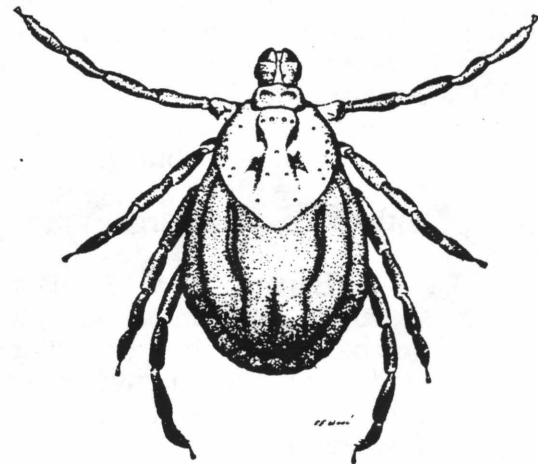
These beetle-like insects feed on a variety of plant and animal material, from flowers to other insects. They have chewing mouthparts, and can damage some flowers by their feeding. There is probably no way to use a program of limiting their food supply as a control strategy--there is just too much that they can utilize as food! While these critters may enter houses in small to large numbers (rarely), there is little in the way of food to sustain them there and they will not "infest" the house, that is remain there and reproduce.

At the lake in the woods. The problems here are inside and outside--spiders, wasps, ticks, and chiggers. Remember to take along an aerosol for use in controlling the excess spiders that nature seems to provide every campsite. Remember that "daddy longlegs"--you know, the spiders with the really long legs that walk so slow, but seem to find your campsite or cabin--these critters will not harm you. Leave 'em be--they gotta' eat too!

Wasps are probably the most troublesome pests at campsites. They are common visitors to trash can and your dinner table. Keeping the lid on the trash can at all times will discourage them from returning in large numbers to this site. If there are numerous yellowjackets at the campsite, check around carefully to make sure that they are not nesting in the ground nearby. If so--move! Don't do anything about control--you are likely to not do it well and create more problems. They may come to lights at night, so be careful.

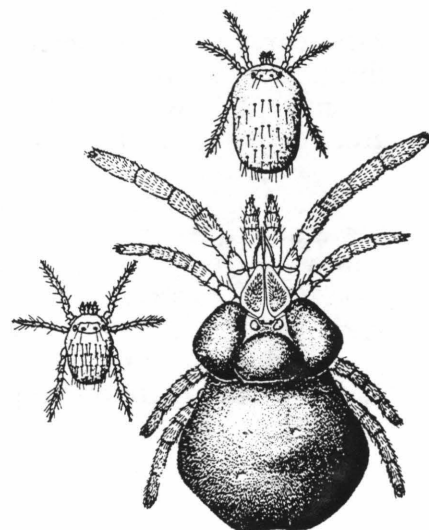


Ticks and chiggers are found in wooded areas, and at the edge of wooded areas in fields. Use repellents whenever you venture into these sites. Check for ticks thoroughly--everyone, even the dog! Check your head and the dog's head. You can not get to or even see a chigger fast enough to prevent it from burrowing into your skin (usually at the belt line or sock line), feeding for a short time, then crawling out. You don't start to itch until it has left--too late to do anything then. Use repellents at the sock and pant cuff level. Enjoy those little chigger bites, there is no better, short term pleasure, then reaching down to your calf and giving that chigger bite a hefty scratch.

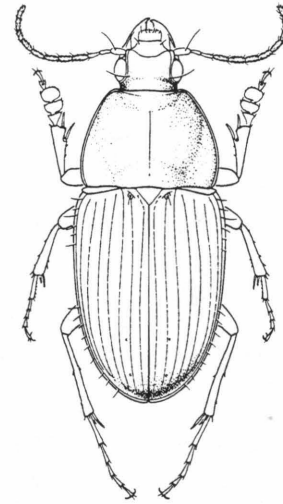


AMERICAN DOG TICK

Ants are a common pest no matter where you are, but they can be extra troublesome when you are camping or staying at a cabin in the woods. Perhaps the most common are thief ants. They can be found nesting almost anywhere, indoors and outdoors. These and the little black ant are attracted to sweet food materials, and may infest food stored in cabinets or at the camp kitchen. Be certain to clean up spills (wash them away), or these ants will locate this food source and explore for others. An aerosol spray is the best quick solution to problems with ants.



Ground beetles are common almost everywhere this time of year. These small to large black or brownish black beetles are often attracted to outdoor and indoor lights at night, and will find their way into houses, tents, and trailers. They look a little worse than they actually are, they will not bite or harm people. Naturally, they are predators on a variety of other insects. They spend their time on the ground hunting for food. There are many species of ground beetles and they are found throughout the state.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR AND WHAT TO DO IN JULY

Midsummer heat and dry weather have some effect on the insect populations that have become established around the house. There are some things to do and not do in regard to these insects.

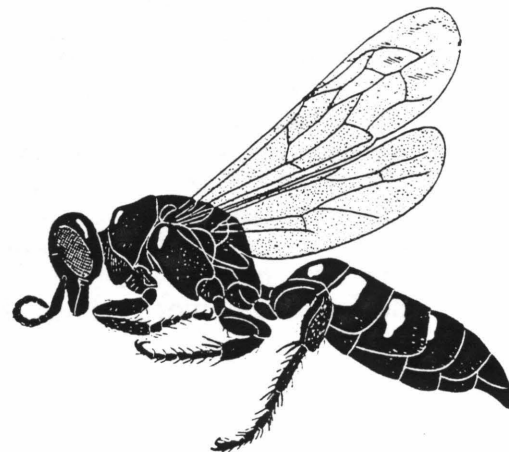
White grubs in the lawn. Now is the best time to consider treating for white grubs in the lawn. The adults (Japanese beetles primarily) have emerged and mated, the females have laid their eggs, and those eggs have hatched to first stage grubs. These grubs are close to the surface of the soil--within easy reach of insecticides applied as a liquid (remember to water after) or granular formulation (water that too). The small grubs are more susceptible to the applications now than they will be in August--when they will be much bigger.



Yellowjackets in the lawn. Now is the time to be on the lookout for yellowjacket nests in the ground where a lawnmower may contact them. This can be a dangerous way to locate these nests, with some life-threatening results. The best strategy for treating ground nests is to work at night (late), and to pour a gallon or more of a garden insecticide (1-2% carbaryl works well) onto the nest opening, soaking the soil. A bucketfull of soil over the surface after the liquid treatment is helpful. A little gasoline poured onto the nest site/opening also works--but it is a bit dangerous (no smoking please), and it will kill the grass.

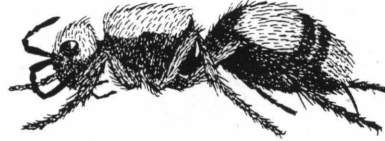


White grub parasites on the lawn. About this time of year the wasp-like parasites of white grubs appear in turfgrass. They are brown and black wasps about the size of yellowjackets, but they have some bright yellow spots on the abdomen. They will fly over the surface of the grass, sometimes in large numbers, in search of white grub larvae below the surface. They land, crawl through the thatch, and insert eggs into the grubs in the soil. In a few days they will be gone.



VELVET ANTS

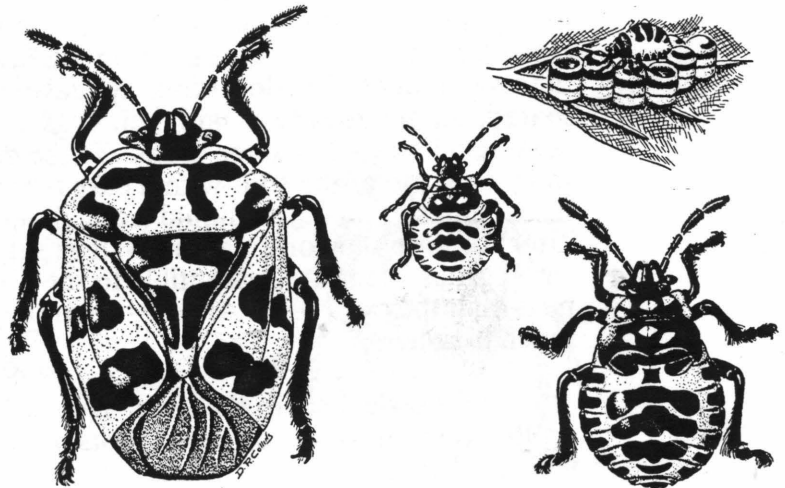
These black and red insects resemble ants in their general body shape, but they are much larger. They are not ants but are closely related to wasps (but they do not have wings). The long setae on the body of these insects gives them a "velvet" appearance, but be careful. Look but don't touch is the best advice for this critters. They can give you a nasty sting if handled. However, they will not generally attack people.



Velvet ants are parasitic on other wasps and ants. The female locates and invades the ground nest of a bumble bee or other wasp and deposits her eggs in the cells of the host. The larvae of the velvet ant attack and feed on the larvae of the host. Velvet ants are not common in Virginia, but we get several reports each year.

HARLEQUIN BUG

These rather striking looking insects are members of the stink bug family. They are bright colored black and red or black and yellow, and about 1/2 inch long. The adults and immature stages have sucking mouthparts. Harlequin bugs (named after their bright colors not their habits) are commonly found in gardens attacking a variety of plants.



HOUSE FLIES

The recent hot weather (and what we will certainly have in the next several weeks) will speed along the life cycle of many insects, especially house flies. They breed in garbage and become a problem when garbage is not properly covered at this time of year. Adults do not usually fly far from their breeding site, so when there are large numbers of flies in an area, the source is probably close! When restaurants or other food-service facilities have fly problems in late summer it is often linked to dumpsters that are too close to the building (sometimes this can not be avoided) and/or the dumpster has not been cleaned (washed!) and allowed to drain (make sure you secure the drain plug after cleaning--to keep rodents out). Some preventative measures now may help reduce what will probably be a healthy and numerous house fly population in the fall.

