Utah
PEST
PRESS

IPM Fact Sheet # 1
July 2013

Spiders

Management Tools for a Healthy Learning Environment

Spooky Spiders

General Info:

Spiders are arachnids, closely related to other 8-legged critters like ticks, mites, harvestmen, and scorpions. Spiders should be considered beneficial, as they help to kill other pests both in and out of buildings. In Utah, there are only a few spiders that we should treat with caution.

What do they look like?

Spiders vary in size from the tarantula down to the congenial jumping spider, and smaller. Most spiders have 8 eyes, but others can have between 0 to 6 eyes! Spiders don't have antennae. They have modified mouthparts called pedipalps. In male spiders these palps are enlarged and look like boxing gloves. The "boxing gloves" are not an identifying feature of the hobo spider, but of male spiders in general. Spiders only have two major body segments, whereas insects have three.

Life Cycle

There are many different kinds of spiders in Utah, but they all go through the same basic life cycle: egg, immatures that grow (molt) through many stages, finally reaching the reproductive adult stage. This process can take months to years depending on the spider.

Common Utah Spiders

The most common spiders are the funnelweb spiders, including the hobo and grass spiders. Other common spiders include the woodlouse, orb weavers, wolf spiders, jumping spiders, ground spiders, the hacklemesh weavers, sac, and widow spiders.

Above:
Figure 1. Hobo spider female and egg sac.

Right:
Figure 2. Banded garden spider.

Did You Know?

- Spiders have 8 legs, 2 body segments, and 2 palps instead of antennae
- Black widow spiders are the major spider of medical concern in Utah
- Brown recluse spiders are NOT found in Utah
- Spiders are beneficial organisms because they prey upon many other pest insects
- The best control methods for spiders include exclusion, cleaning, reducing clutter, and tolerance

Left:
Figure 3. Wolf spider with newly hatched spiderlings on her back

Right:
Figure 4. Female black widow spider with red hourglass on the underside of the abdomen (Whitney Cranshaw, CSU, Bugwood)

The major spider of medical concern is the adult female black widow. This solid black spider has a bulbus abdomen (hind section) and a red hourglass on its underside (not on top). This spider is fairly clumsy out of its web and bites usually only occur if a hand is stuck in the web, or if a spider is inadvertently grabbed while cleaning in areas like the garage or shed.

Black widows come out at night and capture prey in their cobweb-like webs. Search for widows at night with a flashlight and carefully crush spiders, or treat the spider directly with an aerosol insecticide.

Since black widows don't move easily when outside of their webs, they wait for prey to come to them. Often, exterior lighting will attract many insects that they catch in their webs and eat. Changing the exterior lighting to sodium vapor bulbs (the yellow bulbs) reduces attraction of prey insects and will help keep widows away from the grounds.

Managing Spiders with Integrated Pest Management

- Caulk, seal and screen all entry points into the building to exclude spiders.
- Change exterior lighting from the standard lights to sodium vapor bulbs to reduce prey insects attracted to the building.
- Vacuum regularly to suck up spiders, webbing, and other insects which can serve as food for spiders.
- Minimize clutter to reduce areas suitable for spiders to hide, reproduce, and lay eggs.
- Use sticky traps along baseboards to monitor and help control ground dwelling spiders.
- Interior or exterior insecticidal sprays are generally ineffective at reducing spider populations in the long-term, but may provide some short-term knockdown and repellency.
- Insecticidal dusts can be used in low traffic areas such as boiler rooms, crawl spaces, and voids for longer residual control of spiders.

For more info, check out:

Spiders: USU Extension
http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/factsheet/spidersn-2012pr.pdf

Top 20 Arachnids: USU Extension
http://utahpests.usu.edu/uppdl/htm/top-20-arachnids

The Hobo Spider Page: USU Extension
http://utahpests.usu.edu/uppdl/htm/hobo-spiders

Spiders in the Home: CSU Extension
http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/05512.html

Colorado School IPM:
http://colordoipmcenter.agsci.colostate.edu/

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