

Bedbugs and Your Rental Property

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Since the mid-90's, bedbug infestations have been on the rise in the United States. The little critters that were at one time mostly eradicated in our country seem to be making a comeback--and trust that no one is applauding their return. So how do bedbugs figure into how you manage your rental properties? Here are a few things to be aware of.

Generally, bedbugs have never been seen as anything more than annoying pests. Unlike some insects which act as disease-carrying vectors, like ticks and fleas, bedbugs have not been known to spread any type of illness. From a legal standpoint, this benefits landlords because it doesn't affect the concept of habitation--meaning the tenants cannot legally opt out of their lease due to health endangerment.

Here's the scary part: The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released a **joint statement** on April 25th of this year acknowledging that bedbug bites can lead to severe allergic reactions in some people as well as create the potential for secondary skin infections from scratching. The statement also cites increased insomnia and anxiety in those people who been exposed.

The two agencies have committed to more investigation of the health effects of bedbugs. If they do discover more detrimental health outcomes, then that may allow for tenants to break their leases, leaving you with unrented, infested properties.

Of course, the best way to deal with the problem is to prevent it from being a problem in the first place. There's much speculation about why they are being reintroduced into our environment at such a fast rate, including more international travel which equates to more exposure. However, another speculation points to how properties are treated with pesticides.

In the past, general treatments were done by exterminators for the whole property, be it a hotel room, your own home, or your rental properties. Now, some insecticides have become so specialized, that they target specific pests like ants or roaches. In addition, the scope of spraying has gone from the whole property coverage to spot treatments. So, if the exterminator is only treating for certain insects in certain places, you can see how the bedbugs can get around those isolated barriers and find a place where they can multiply and thrive.

To compound the problem, some bedbugs have already developed a tolerance for the chemicals used to eradicate them. The CDC and EPA discuss the need for a multi-pronged treatment plan to address the problem.

If you don't have an exterminator you're working with, you might want to get one fast. If you do have someone on contract, you might be well-served to contact the firm and consult about ways and treatments to prevent the bedbugs from even getting a foothold on your property.

Bedbugs are not good tenants, and you do not want them to move into your property. However, by staying informed and by using your resources, you can stay ahead of these freeloaders before they take up residence.

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