

Bed Bug Management and Control Guidelines

The appearance of bed bugs in homes and businesses is becoming increasingly problematic in Alameda County. Although over 30 pathogens have been found in bed bugs, transmission of these pathogens to humans has never been documented and is considered highly unlikely. Nevertheless, bed bugs are considered one of the most difficult of all pests to control. Eliminating bed bugs is an expensive, exhausting, and emotionally draining process. Moreover, because bed bugs can survive many months without feeding, only one fertilized female is enough to start an infestation. Managing bed bug infestations requires a plan and involves coordination, communication, cooperation, and teamwork. A key component in successful bed bug management is early detection. Herein is where the ACVCSD Vector Control Biologists can use their expertise to identify and confirm the signs of infestation. Listed below are the specific services and conditions that the ACVCSD can perform:

1. An inspection of rooms and properties: Bed bugs thrive under conditions which are enhanced by the availability of hiding spots close to humans. Thus, a thorough inspection can only be achieved when the homeowner/tenant/property manager make efforts to reduce the clutter to eliminate hiding spots and move furniture to allow access to hard to reach places such as behind dressers, headboards, and sofas.
2. Make recommendations on structural repairs: To eliminate areas bed bugs can hide in, seal cracks and crevices with caulking; reduce clutter; use pillow and mattress encasements; and deploy bed bug monitoring devices.
3. Recommend hiring a pest control company: The complete elimination of bed bugs requires highly trained and licensed individuals knowledgeable in bed bug biology, behavior, and the proper use of pesticides. We do not recommend “do- it- yourself” pest control using commercially available pesticides and “bug bombs.” Most of these products are not designed for bed bugs and the use of these products (while they may kill some bed bugs) may only spread the bed bugs to adjacent rooms or units; making the problem much more difficult to control. The ACVCSD does not endorse specific pest control companies. It is the sole responsibility of the homeowner, business owner, or property manager to seek and hire the pest control companies of their choice.
4. The ACVCSD will maintain a neutral role in any tenant-landlord bed bug disputes.

5. The ACVCSD Vector Control Biologist, upon request, will perform a re-inspection after the pest control treatment to check for signs of bed bugs.

The steps in a bed bug management scheme are inspection, confirmation, cleaning/repairing, treatment, future prevention, and follow-up/evaluation. Because of the stealthy habits of bed bugs and their remarkable abilities to tolerate environmental fluctuations and host availability, it is difficult to eradicate them once they become established. When bed bugs are first detected, DO NOT OVERREACT. Early detection is the first step leading to successful intervention. However, intervention can only be successful when everyone involved are communicating, cooperating, and completing their assigned tasks. Any slight deviations in these events will likely render the control program ineffective and allow the bed bugs to continue their spread.