

You're Going To Be Seeing a Lot of Spiders

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

I was having a conversation with a friend this week and they mentioned that they were vacuuming cobwebs out of their house only to have them appear again two days later. I told her to just get used to it because it was only going to get worse over the next six to eight weeks. After I peeled her off the ceiling I explained further what was going on. Just let me say that if you don't like spiders, and I mean really don't like spiders, don't ready any further!

Spiders live on insects and other insect like things even including other spiders. Many spiders do not survive the winter as an adult, they either overwinter as eggs or an adult female does hibernate so as to lay eggs and die in the spring. It all depends on the species. When the spring starts out there aren't a lot of insects necessarily available for food so spiders grow slowly. But as the summer progresses we see a constantly increasing population of insects and as the insect population grows, so do the creatures that live on insects, like spiders. By the time we get to September things can get kind of out of hand. Then insects start trying to come inside our homes to find a safe place to overwinter. Right along with those insects come the things that live on insects.

Now that half of you are totally freaking out let me say that we really only have two "venomous" spiders in Kansas. I prefer venomous over poisonous because the only time they are a problem is if they bite you and inject their venom. Hemlock is poisonous, copperheads and brown recluses are venomous! With that out of the way, we have black widows and brown recluses in Kansas. Black widows are very rare. In 36 years of people bringing me spiders to identify I have had exactly ONE black widow. Brown recluses, on the other hand, are so common that I can find them in every house in the region, given enough time!

Both spiders can be a problem if they bite you, or it can honestly be a non event. All spiders can bite. It's how they live. But many of them either have jaws too small to puncture our skin, or if they do puncture the skin, the result won't be much worse than a mosquito bite. If you ever have any apparent bite that won't heal or causes excessive pain, redness and swelling, get to your family doctor as soon as possible. Brown recluses come by their name honestly. They don't spin webs, they stalk and attack predators and they want to avoid people. You're going to find them in piles of newspapers, in boxes in rooms you don't go into often, or deep in the garage where you rarely go!

To reduce spiders in your home take steps to reduce insects in your home. Make sure that doors and windows seal tight. This time of year treat the foundation and areas up and down from the foundation with a general lawn and garden insecticide. Use a ready to use home insect pest control product and treat the baseboard areas, locations where utilities enter your house and thresholds of doorways into your house. Insects, and spiders, will often travel where the wall and floor meet because they are at less risk of attack then out in the open. Do not use "bombs" or glue traps. Bombs are really only effective on flying insects. Glue traps don't really reduce populations and only show you how many insects and spiders are really in your house, which will ultimately only freak you out more!

We will have insects and spiders in our houses. That's a fact. You can reduce those populations but not eliminate them. Once freezing weather starts to show up, things will start to get better. Well, at least until spring.