

Fall Household Invaders

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

As the weather starts to cool down there's a whole host of critters out there looking for places that might better improve their chances of surviving the winter. The list of critters looking to get into our home or any other outbuildings is far too long to try to list here. These rascals have no qualms about trying to find food and shelter in your house, basement, attic, garage or any available out buildings that there might be. The thing to keep in mind is that you will not keep them all out no matter what you do. But there are a series of steps you can take to reduce the number that do get in!

The first and most important step is exclusion. Even new homes can have all sorts of little gaps and cracks that invaders can, and will, come through. The older your home gets, the more of those opportunities there are! You can do a lot, to reduce this invasion, simply by going around with a caulking gun or an aerosol can of expanding foam. Check to make sure that doors and windows fit tight, that weather stripping doesn't show gaps and that door sweeps on the bottom of doors seal tightly.

Wherever utilities or any pipe or wire enters the house, make sure that it is well sealed up. It doesn't take much of an opening for some of these little insects to stroll in. Look closely from the outside and if possible even from the inside during the day. If you see daylight, figure out why! Older homes with rock or block foundations present a real challenge. Spend time with that caulking gun inside and out. If you can see any gap or crack, get it filled in! Keep in mind that all of these efforts will also help to reduce cold windy drafts in the middle of winter!

Spend time in the attic as well. Several species of flies, those dreaded little Asian multi-colored lady beetles and othercritters love to overwinter in our attics! Get up there during the day and look for any little glimmer of daylight. Another trick for attics, crawl spaces, garages or any rooms that are occupied less than four hours per day by people are the No-Pest Strips. These strips are not the sticky fly paper but a thick plastic like strip in a cardboard container that gives off a low level vapor that is very effective at controlling flying insects and some crawling insects. Hanging one in the attic can greatly reduce the number of flies that show up in the living quarters during the winter.

The next step that you can take, and will be more effective if you have gone through the effort to do all the sealing and caulking I already mentioned, is to use an insecticide treatment around the exterior foundation. Just about any lawn and garden insecticide is labeled for foundation or nuisance insect treatments. Many products now come as a built in hose end sprayer. There is no mixing required just hook up to your garden hose, turn on the water and spray. Spray up on the foundation a couple of feet and out away from the foundation a couple of feet. This will only need to be done once in a season. Insects trying to get into the house will pick up the insecticide and even if they do get inside the house, they will soon die.

The last step homeowners can take is to use an indoor insect spray. Most of these come as a ready to use product. Don't go spraying these all over the house. Focus on baseboard areas, door thresholds and where utilities enter the house. Especially focus on porches and basement areas. These only need to be down once per season also. Taking all of these steps will help reduce the number of fall invaders you see in your home!