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# Pest Patrol News

# Unwanted Holiday 'Guests'

For a variety of reasons, many homes will experience increased pest problems during the holidays and the months ahead. Regular pest control is important during this time of the year because of the numerous pests that people encounter. Here are just a few of them.

**Fall and winter invaders** are pests that actively look for a warmer and drier place to spend the winter. A wide variety of insects invade in the fall and winter, plus rats, mice and other animals.

**Holiday feast pests** include ants, cockroaches, rats, mice, and other pests that feast on food leftovers from your holiday meals. Before the night is over, pick up food crumbs, cover and store leftovers, and empty indoor food waste cans. Clean the dishes, or simply leave them in the sink with soapy water.

**Pests in holiday food gifts.** It is surprising that food gift packs (dried fruits, crackers, etc.) are sometimes infested, or become infested, with beetles, moths, and other pests. Check these items, and don't plan on storing them in your cupboards for long periods.

**Pests from travels and overnight guests.** Bed bugs can crawl into a suitcase, purse or pocket, and be transported to a new location. It is important that these pests be controlled by a professional—and sooner rather than later. Don't give these pests a chance to spread!

**Pests that live in firewood** can be inadvertently brought indoors. Guard against this by inspecting the firewood first, and only bring in what you will burn within a day or two.

**Christmas trees** sometimes have aphids, beetles, spiders, and other pests in them. When the tree is brought in from the cold, these pests warm up and start crawling or flying about indoors.

## Thank You!

To all of our new and longtime customers we want to say "**Thank You!**" for your valued business and many referrals! We wish you all **Peace, Happiness,** & **Prosperity** throughout the New Year!

# Move-in Time for Mice & Rats


In the fall and winter mice and rats invade homes in record numbers, looking for food and a more comfortable place to spend the cooler months. The question many people ask us is, "How do mice and rats get in?" The short answer is, *"Very easily!"*

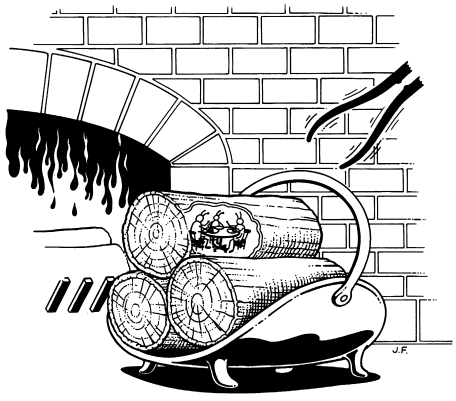
Mice and rats have an amazing ability to squeeze through small holes. A young mouse can easily squeeze through a hole even smaller than a dime: a young rat can squeeze through a hole smaller than a quarter. Amazing! And if the opening is too small, they will often make it bigger by gnawing around the edges.

Openings around service conduits like electricity and phone lines, and water pipes, provide easy access indoors and between apartments. Dryer vents and gaps around window-installed air conditioner units are other common entry points. Rodents can also crawl up through drain pipes not properly capped, as well as under exterior doors that don't seal well.

Rats reach roof areas easily by "tight-rope walking" along utility lines and tree branches, by climbing up pipes, and even through gutter downspouts. This enables them to enter through roof and chimney vents, cracks, around fireplace flashing, and through any other cracks and other openings.

Surprisingly, rodents sometimes are inadvertently brought indoors hidden in bags, boxes, and used appliances or furniture. And they sometime scurry in through an open door or unscreened window.

Rodents are persistent, and they find many ways to get indoors. If you have these common pests, give us a call to professionally control them.



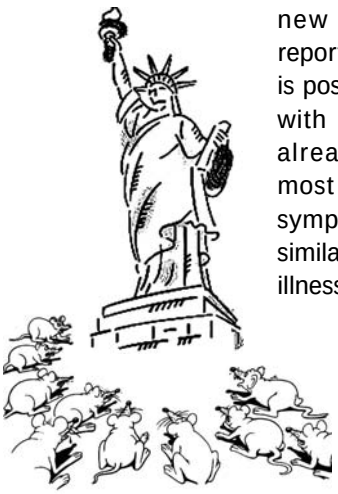
"Aw, gee, Dad—why do we have to have so many fire drills?

*Thank you for your business and referrals!*

# New Viruses found in New York Subway Rats

A team of scientists captured 133 rats at various places in New York City's subways, and used DNA sequencing to catalog the pathogens they were carrying.

They found an alarming number of disease-causing bacteria, viruses, and protozoa, but what was most alarming was the viruses they found—*18 viruses that are entirely unknown to science.*

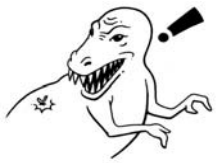


The authors note that the new viruses have not been reported yet in humans, but it is possible that human infection with some of these viruses is already occurring. Because most viruses cause only mild symptoms, or symptoms very similar to other illnesses, many illnesses are misdiagnosed.

A few of the viruses stand out, including a new species similar to the *hepatitis C virus,* and *Seoul hantavirus,* a dangerous disease that causes excessive bleeding, and had never been found in New York before.

The study raises the question of how many more unknown viruses are lurking in rat populations around the country.

# The Future of 'Jurassic Parks'



Ever since Michael Crichton published Jurassic Park in 1990, followed by the classic Spielberg film three years later, there has been a popular urban legend that blood-engorged mosquito fossils are common and that a real Jurassic Park is possible someday. In fact, fossilized mosquitoes are fairly rare, and even rarer are fossils of mosquitoes or other blood-sucking insects where there is evidence of blood in their stomachs from their latest victim—to date what has been discovered is only a couple mosquito fossils (one was discovered recently), a few sandflies, and an assassin bug.

Unfortunately being able to extract DNA from blood that is now fossilized is a complete fantasy. So there never will be a Jurassic Park, except at the movies.

# Do Sunspots Affect Honey Bees?

Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), a phenomenon where large numbers of honey bees gradually leave their hives, never to return again, has been confounding scientists all over the world since the disorder was first identified and named in 2006. Scientists have thought that the problem could be caused by parasitic mites, various bee diseases, certain kinds of pesticides, pollution, and many other causes, but research has eliminated each of these as being the sole cause of the disorder. Lately research has been focusing on the possibility of a combination of factors as being the cause.

It's in the midst of all this confusion that a new study was just released in the *Journal of Apicultural Research* that points to an entirely unexpected culprit—solar storms, or sunspots. Sunspots cause fluctuations in earth's magnetic fields, and as it turns out, bees use magnetic fields to navigate by.

It is difficult for us humans to understand how important magnetic fields are to bees. It would be like if we needed to go somewhere, but our eyes were bound so we couldn't see, or heavy fog made our sight useless. Bees use the earth's magnetic fields to help them know where they are, and how to get home. This ability, called *magnetoreception,* is also used by birds, fish, and other animals. The researchers found that bees subjected to different magnetic fields were less able to find their way home.

Taking this a step further, the researchers were also able to show that periods of increased levels of solar storms were the same periods as when honey bee losses were the greatest.

Sunspots may end up as only part of the reason behind honey bee loses, but it may be the key part that has gone unnoticed up until now.

# Trap Jaw Ants are Spreading

The trap jaw ant *(Odontomachus haematodus),* originally from South America, was first recorded in Alabama 50 years ago. Although this ant is known to be aggressive and invasive, it was thought that the species hadn't spread much. However, new surveys show that trap jaw ants have been on the move in recent years and have now spread across the Gulf Coast states.

Trap jaw ants have wide jaws that snap shut (hence the name "trap jaw") with such incredible force and speed that it can stun their prey. Their bite is among the fastest known movements in the animal kingdom, with a speed of up to 143 mph. When threatened, trap-jaw ants fire their jaws at the ground, which pushes the ant upward with such force that it hurls them up like popcorn out of a frying pan.

These ants also have a stinger that is capable of inflicting a painful sting. They are likely to become an increasingly common pest in the future.