Bird & Mammal Mites

Bird and mammal mites are often encountered as household invaders during the late spring and summer months. Mites (order Acarina) can be distinguished from their insect relatives by the two body regions (cephalothorax and abdomen), sucking mouthparts, lack of antennae, and four pairs of legs (as adults). The mite life cycle generally consists of an egg stage, a larval stage, one or more nymphal stages, and an adult stage. The entire life cycle requires 1 to 6 weeks (2-3 on the average) for completion.

Bird Mites; the chicken mite and the northern fowl mite are both ectoparasites of poultry and other domestic fowl, as well as many species of wild birds. These mites are commonly found in buildings where bird nests are located around the eaves or in attics. The life cycle is very short, and if conditions are favorable, complete development may occur in 7 days.

Mammal Mites: several species of mites associated with mammals may be found in homes. These include the house mouse mite, the rodent mite and the rat mites. All of these mites are associated with wild or domestic rodent populations. The life cycle of these mites generally requires 17 to 23 days. If these mites are found they almost certainly indicate the presence of a rodent infestation in or around the building.

Other mites found in the home, in addition to the bird and mammal mites, include the house dust mites, clover mites, grain mites and roach mites. Because of the varied habits of the mites found in buildings, it is important to have any mite pest accurately identified.

Integrated Bird & Mammal Mite Management

Although the normal host animals of biting mites are birds and rodents, they will bite humans. This occurs most frequently in the late spring and summer when mite populations are high and when young birds and rodents begin to leave their nests. The hungry mites wander away from these nests in search of food and may be found climbing about on walls, ceilings and bedding. The bites of these mites cause itching, swelling and raised, reddish spots on the skin.

Although standard insect repellents containing diethyl meta-toluamide (deet) will prevent these mites from biting, longterm, continuous use of these products is not recommended.

Effective control of bird and mammal mites is achieved by:
(1) locating and removing bird or rodent nests;
(2) treating infested areas with an appropriate pesticide.
The first step is to locate all bird and/or rodent nests. Search for nests around eaves, in attics, in chimneys, in wall voids, in basements, and around porches and foundations. After locating any nests, but BEFORE removing them, treat with chlorpyrifos. Now, remove any nests and dispose of them (away from the building!). Immediately after doing so, thoroughly treat the infested area. Additional spot treatments in areas where mites are seen wandering (like baseboards) may be helpful. Be sure to initiate any structural changes or sanitary measures needed to prevent re-infestation by birds or mammals.

Read and follow instructions on the pesticide label. Heed all warnings. Check with your physician if you have any concerns regarding your personal health. Revised by Tom Ellis, M.S., Department of Entomology, Michigan State University Extension.

This publication contains pesticide recommendations. Changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly, some materials mentioned may no longer be available, and some uses may no longer be legal. All pesticides distributed, sold, and/or applied in New York State must be registered with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Questions concerning the legality and/or registration status for pesticide use in New York State should be directed to the appropriate Cornell Cooperative Extension Specialist or your regional DEC office. REaD THe LABEL BEFORE APPLyING ANY PESTICIDE.

Source:  http://web1.msue.msu.edu/imp/mod02/01500564.html
Updated 2006