

Reducing the Exposure Risk of Bed Bugs at 4-H Camp

Bed bugs are not associated with disease-spread but can leave itchy and inflamed bites on humans. They can also populate a dwelling if they are accidentally brought in on clothing, bedding, stuffed animals, or luggage.

While rare, the risk of bed bugs at residential camps is a possibility. All the mattresses used at 4-H Camp are manufactured with AntiBac Vinyl to be bed bug proof, but this does not prevent the insects from transferring to the joints of the wooden bunk beds from affected luggage and bedding brought to camp. 4-H Camp is under contract with a certified pest control company to conduct monthly inspections and treat any issues that arise. Reducing the exposure risk begins with preparations made at home as you help your camp participant pack for 4-H Camp.

Inspecting Luggage for 4-H Camp:

Complete a visual inspection of all the items your camp participant will bring to camp. Adult bed bugs are reddish-brown, wingless, and about the size of an apple seed (5 to 7 millimeters). They are flat with oval-shaped bodies. Young bedbugs, or nymphs, are smaller and can appear translucent or yellowish in color. Bedbug eggs are tiny and white.

Preparing Luggage for 4-H Camp:

Bed bugs and their eggs are effectively killed when exposed to temperatures above 120 degrees for a minimum of 20 minutes. It is recommended that all camp participants complete the following steps when preparing their luggage for transport to 4-H Camp:

- Wash all bedding, pillows, clothes, backpacks, shoes, and stuffed animals in hot water and dry the items on high heat for a 20-minute cycle, at minimum.
- Loosely place all these items and any others that will be brought to 4-H Camp, in a sealed black trash bag and place them outdoors in direct sunlight or in a vehicle sitting in direct sunlight for a full day. Exceptions would be items that are susceptible to melting or damage from heat such as deodorant and medication.
- Once the sealed black trash bags are removed from the vehicle, store the contents in a safe space away from potentially affected areas in the home, such as a garage or in a vehicle.

If an Exposure Occurs at 4-H Camp:

- 4-H Camp personnel follow strict procedures to ensure that guests are safe, comfortable, and have as few disruptions to their overnight stay as possible.
- Extension Agents responsible for 4-H Camp are provided with *Procedures for Mitigating Exposure when Bedbugs are Present at 4-H Camp* to aid in the prompt heat treatment of affected cabins and luggage. Insecticides are never used on, or near, bedding, or personal belongings.



- If the exposure occurs in your camp participant's cabin, you will receive a "Bed Bug Exposure Information Sheet" with instructions for safely handling their personal belongings at the conclusion of the 4-H Camp session.

Symptoms of Exposure:

It can be difficult to distinguish bed bug bites from other insect bites. In general, the sites of bed bug bites are usually:

- Red, often with a darker red spot in the middle
- Itchy
- Arranged in a rough line or in a cluster
- Located on the face, neck, arms, and hands

Sources

University of Kentucky Entomology:

<https://entomology.ca.uky.edu/ef636>

Cabinet for Health and Family Services:

<https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dphps/emb/Pages/bed-bugs.aspx>

