

Common New England Health and Nuisance Pests



Bed bugs are flat and 1/4 inch long. After a blood meal they are round and 3/8 inch long. They feed at night on people and pets, but do not transmit disease. During the day they hide in mattress seams, bed springs, floor cracks, behind wallpaper, or in other hidden areas.



Deer tick adults have eight legs. They can transmit Lyme disease if attached for at least 24 hours. New England is a high risk area for this disease. Ticks often migrate to the hairline, behind the ears, or the armpits. On dogs, they attach to the ear, shoulder, and upper leg areas.



Fleas are 1/8 inch long. Bites on humans usually occur as a red halo around a small red spot on the lower leg. Vacuuming helps to remove fleas. Seal the vacuum cleaner bag in a plastic bag before disposing.



Head lice are most often found on the lower back of the head and behind the ears. Females are 1/16 to 1/8 inch long, males a bit smaller. Gray-white eggs are 1/16 inch long and attached to hair shafts near the scalp. Head lice feed on blood with piercing sucking mouthparts. This can cause intense itching.



Mosquitoes can transmit diseases and parasites to humans and pets. Eggs are laid in or near stagnant water. Eliminating breeding sites by draining gutters, old tires, discarded containers, and bird baths is key to reducing the local mosquito population. Electronic “bug zappers” and sound devices are not effective.



Poison Ivy is a woody perennial climbing vine or ground cover that produces a skin irritant which is present all year, but most easily released in spring–early summer when leaves are tender. There are three leaflets per stalk, with two opposite each other and the third at the end of the stalk. Leaflet edges may be smooth, toothed, or lobed.