



# MEDICAL ENTOMOLOGY CENTRE

Insect Research & Development Ltd

Spring 2006

## DEVELOPMENTS : Stowaway here to stay?



Brown Banded cockroaches naturally prefer warmer climates but they are beginning to find this country has its charms too. In recent weeks one or two cases of infestation have come to light in the Eastern region and the pest's arrival has been sourced to incoming luggage from foreign parts.

*Ian Burgess, Director of Medical Entomology Centre says:*

“Brown Banded cockroaches are originally an African species. However, they are now becoming established in European countries and can survive quite happily in homes, as well as places like restaurants and kitchens.

“They seek out warm areas and enjoy those hard to reach places such as the inside of upholstered furniture, refrigerator motors, TV cabinets or behind wallpaper. Their staple diet is starch, so anything like glue or book binding is a real feast, both commonly found in domestic dwellings.”

Ten to 15mm long, the creature gets its name from its yellowish brown colouring striped with brown bands. Both sexes have wings. A female produces up to 20 egg cases in her lifetime and each one may contain as many as 16 eggs. These take approximately a month to hatch out and it can be up to nine months before the hatchlings reach full grown, reproductive size.

Although the odd one or two can be killed off with proprietary insecticide, anything more than that requires the attention of a licensed pest controller who will treat the infestation with professional products. If it is impossible or inadvisable to use sprays, such as in hospitals and schools, an alternative form of elimination is specialised bait.

### Insect Diary

#### Beware hitch-hiking ticks:

- Spring is the ideal time for getting out and about in the countryside but you could end up with more than a healthy appetite. Ticks can easily be picked up whilst walking through grassy areas so always check to make sure you are not playing host to any when you get home. A bite from a tick may result in Lyme disease. For more information go to: <http://www.bada-uk.org>

### STUDY DAYS AND COURSES COMING UP:

#### Human Lice:

Wednesday 5th July

#### Scabies:

Thursday 6th July

#### NEW for 2006:

Bed Bugs May 9th

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## CLINICAL TRIALS NEWS

Clinical trials carried out by Insect Research and Medical Entomology Centre, have helped Hedrin, the new non-toxic treatment for headlice, on its way. The results, published in the British Medical Journal, concluded that Hedrin is harmless to humans, and safe enough to use on babies from six months old and on pregnant and breast-feeding mothers. It is also free of any substance that could irritate asthma sufferers.

The clear product is applied to dry hair and left on for eight hours, or overnight. The hair is then shampooed as normal. The process must be repeated several days later to ensure any remaining eggs are destroyed. In trials on 214 infested children and 39 adults, Hedrin cured 70 percent of cases.

Christine Brown, a clinical nurse working with MEC says: "Many parents have given up on conventional insecticide-based treatments, either because they are worried about putting toxic substances on their child's head or because the treatments have topped working as lice build up a resistance. Hedrin kill the lice fast using a physical mode of action, plus it is non-toxic, doesn't smell and is easy to use."

### Working with the WHO



Ian Burgess, Director, and Toby Wilkinson, Senior Acarologist, of MEC have been asked to add their expertise to discussions being organised by the World Health Organisation Europe. Gathering together leading authorities from Europe and North America, the WHO is attempting to put in place guidelines to assist people working to control pests within the domestic environment.

The guidelines will offer 'Best Practice' for dealing with pests such as mosquitoes, fleas, lice, mites, cockroaches, flies etc and substances used in their control. In addition the guidelines will cover disease that may result from infestations of the pests.

The project is seen as an important part of putting in place a consistent 'Best Practice' policy across a wide area of the northern hemisphere.

### CONTAINING WHAT?

Each day is different at MEC as Elizabeth Kidman, senior entomologist, found out recently when she received a call from pest controllers at a premier port in the UK. When they opened a container carrying two VW camper vans from Australia they found it teeming with spiders, egg sacs and webbing.

Photographs were emailed through to Elizabeth, who quickly spotted that the creatures were the potentially dangerous red back spider and the Sydney funnel web. Specimens were later sent in the post for a more formal identification.



**Dust mite are not be everyone's idea of a 'special interest' but for Toby Wilkinson, working with MEC, they are proving stars in their own right. Filming a television documentary has involved close-ups of the creatures in the laboratory and hunting them down in the home environment.**

**Look out for the Channel Four programme on your screens in April (originally scheduled to be screened in March)**