

News Release
9-30-13

SEALING HOUSES NOW CAN PREVENT FALL INSECT ENTRY

Several different insects, including Asian lady beetle (ALB) and brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB), may invade West Virginia homes this fall to seek shelter from winter weather. The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) is encouraging homeowners to take action now to protect against potential infestations.

“Both these insects are huge pests to homeowners,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick. “Although neither are directly harmful to people, stinkbugs cause substantial damage to fruit and other cash crops, and are a major problem for farmers.”

WVDA entomologist Berry Crutchfield, Ph.D., recommends that homeowners seal all exterior entry points to the home with caulking, weather-stripping, screens or other material. He says to concentrate efforts around doors, windows, foundation, attic vents, seams in siding, and under eaves or where pipes and wires enter the structure. Also, homeowners should seal interior entry points to individual rooms, concentrating around windows, vents, light fixtures, electrical outlets, etc.

“These practices are often easier said than done, but are the most reliable long-term control methods,” Crutchfield said.

Insecticides can also help deter fall insect invaders, but work best if applied just before pest arrival. Consider treating exterior entry points to the home, in mid-September and mid-October, with an insecticide labeled for “structure-invading” insect pests (e.g. Bayer Advanced Home Pest Control, Ortho Bug-B-Gone, Ortho Home Defense, Spectracide Bug-Stop, Suspend, Tempo), or look for products with these active ingredients: Bifenthrin, Cyfluthrin, Deltamethrin. Follow labeled directions.

During winter months, periodically vacuum up visible insects. To avoid odors in the vacuum cleaner, empty and dispose of contents after each session, or use a nylon stocking stuffed into the vacuum hose and secured around the outside with a rubber band to prevent insects from entering and creating odor in the vacuum cleaner bag or canister. The stocking will collect the insects, and can easily be disposed of in an outdoor trash can. “Sticky boards” or flypaper set near lights can also attract and capture individual insects. Insecticide treatments are of little value during the winter, Crutchfield said, because most of the insects will be dormant in inaccessible portions of the home.

Also known as the “Halloween” or “Japanese” lady beetle, the first established population of ALB was discovered in Louisiana in 1988. Since that time, the beetle has increased its range to include most areas of the United States and parts of southern Canada. It has plagued West Virginia homeowners since 1992. ALB feeds only on aphids and other soft-bodied insects and is

generally considered to be beneficial to agriculture during the summer.

In contrast, BMSB feeds on a wide range of fruit trees, field crops, vegetables, ornamentals, and other plants. It is currently expanding its range in the eastern U.S. and has had a devastating impact on West Virginia fruit production. BMSB was first documented in Pennsylvania in 1998 and reached West Virginia in 2004.