

The strich Defense

Excerpts & Interpretations From: The Bed Bug Combat Manual

Paul Bello Contributor

As a pest management consultant I travel a lot and spend a significant amount of time staying at hotels. Each morning business travelers greet one another in the same way; “Good morning!” However, I doubt my fellow travelers know what I — a bed bug professional — thinking when the words *good morning* escape my lips to greet them. They have no way of knowing that my thoughts include:

- Did you check for bed bugs in your room?
- Do you know how to protect yourself from bed bugs?
- Are you aware of the magnitude of the bed bug problem?
- Did you get bit last night?
- Did you bring bed bugs to this hotel last night?
- Are you about to carry bed bugs home with you from this trip?
- Are you the type of person who gets bit but doesn't react?
- Do you have a delayed bite reaction that prevents you from realizing that you may be carrying bed bugs before it's too late?

One aspect of the bed bug world that has become painfully obvious during my travels is the general lack of public awareness of the bed bug issue. Bed bugs have been on the news and continue to receive extensive media coverage but, it appears that people either have a short memory, think that this just happens to other people or are implementing the classic “ostrich defense” by burying their heads in the sand. When I travel I ask my fellow travelers these questions; often while sharing a ride on the airport parking shuttle. These are the typical responses.

- Are you aware of bed bugs? (Nearly 100 percent say yes.)
- Have you seen bed bugs on the news? (Nearly 100 percent say yes.)
- Are you concerned about bringing bed bugs home with you from your business travel? (Nearly 100 percent say yes.)
- Do you know how to inspect your hotel room for the presence

Typically the traveling public is largely unaware of what to do about bed bugs. Here a fellow traveler gets an impromptu bed bug lesson. “It's up to us bug guys to increase public awareness about bed bugs”, says the author.

of bed bugs and do you know how to protect yourself from bed bugs? (Nearly 100 percent say no.)

Consider the questions, the responses above and the underlying implications. Basically these folks are telling me that though they've heard about bed bugs, don't want to bring them home, they have no idea how to prevent or protect themselves. Invariably someone asks; “What can I do to protect myself?” However, by the time this happens we're nearly at the terminal and I have about 37 seconds to cover the subject.

Clearly the ostrich defense — hiding our heads in the sand and hoping the problem goes away — will be about as effective as the Maginot Line was for France in 1940. If folks don't know what to do about bed bugs they are inadvertently subjecting themselves to the risk of bed bug introduction and infestation. The pest management industry can provide a significant public service by continuing to provide the consumers with clear, concise and viable bed bug awareness information. **PMP**

Bello, a PMP and president of PJB Pest Management Consulting, can be reached at paul.bello@att.net or 770-500-0460.

