

"Bug of the Month"

In the spring, as the weather turns warmer, a number of creatures begin to make their presence known. Spiders fall into this category as they seek new locations to build webs (now that insects are moving about again) and to find mates. In the Pacific Northwest we are blessed with few spider species that can be considered venomous, however, there is one species that is fairly widespread, the Aggressive House Spider or Hobo Spider (*Tegenaria agrestis*). The hobo spider, like its cousins, the domestic house spider (*T. domestica*) and the giant house spider (*T. gigantea*), were imported to the U.S. from Europe. The hobo spider was first reported in Seattle in the 1930's, but did not become common in the Pacific Northwest until the 1960's.

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE? The adult hobo spider is a moderately large (12-18 mm body length) brown spider, with long, **unmarked** legs. The top of the abdomen exhibits a "herringbone" or multiple chevron pattern, although this pattern may be difficult to see on dark individuals. Males can be distinguished by the large pedipalps (look like boxing gloves) that extend between the two front legs. These are actually the male genitalia, not fangs. Females do not have the large pedipalps and generally have a larger abdomen.

WHAT DO THEY DO? The hobo spider quickly established itself around human habitations. It is commonly found around the foundations of houses, and beneath rocks, wood, and ornaments in yards. On the plus side, urban populations of the hobo appear to be decreasing in some areas as a result of predation by the non-venomous giant house spider. Hobo spiders are poor climbers and are rarely seen above ground level. They are commonly found in houses (basement, closets, behind furniture, on window sills), and in garages. The eggs of the hobo spider are deposited in one to four egg cases in late September and October. Each egg case may contain 100 or more eggs. These eggs hatch in early to mid-June. The spiderlings overwinter and may be found indoors. Adult emerge in late July to early August of the second year. The females build a funnel type web and remain stationary. The male wanders nocturnally in search of mates. It is these wanderings that bring the males indoors, sometimes in large numbers. Most bites occur during this time from the male spiders. The hobo spider season peaks during early September, with the males becoming absent by the first week of October.



MANAGEMENT. All spiders are beneficial. They catch and eat nuisance insects such as flies, ants, aphids, cockroaches, small grasshoppers and crickets, thrips, leafhoppers, whiteflies and mosquitoes. The best method of control for the hobo spider, if necessary, is through prevention.

- Prime habitat, such as tall or matted grass next to the house or fence, should be cut and/or removed and replaced with at least a 12-inch gravel edging.
- Cracks and deep cavities in rock walls should be filled with soil or cement.
- Lumber and firewood piles should be modified to eliminate cavities.
- Holes in the walls of the house for pipes or electrical lines should be sealed, as should holes resulting from broken windows or screens, and ill-fitting doors
- Always inspect firewood for spiders and their egg sacs.
- When found in the house, the best control method is to crush the spider with a newspaper or flyswatter. They can also be vacuumed and the dust bag sealed in a plastic bag and disposed of.
- Some success can be achieved using a small box (about 2 inches by 8 inches) with two ends open and the inside bottom and sides coated with a sticky material.
- If a pesticide is warranted, select one labeled for spiders. These materials are best applied along baseboards, door encasements, and corners, only when spiders are present. Treating the house foundation perimeter before spiders become active is preferred. **Always follow all label directions exactly.**

MORE QUESTIONS? Please do not hesitate to give your "Bug Docs" a call at comm.: (360) 315-4450, DSN: 322-4450 or you can e-mail us at MEI@ndvecc.navy.mil.