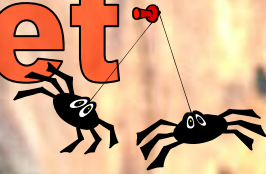


The Spinneret

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Summer 2008



WELCOME, to the Summer issue of **The Spinneret**. If April showers bring May flowers we should be up to our eyeballs in flowers...or pilgrims. Summer is creeping over the horizon and I can just about smell the smoke of fireworks and taste the crunch of hot dog garnished with a sprinkling of sand. Mmmm... Flowers aren't the only things growing around here. Many of the projects we started last year have grown up and are ready to debut. You will be seeing new forms and new services at **BEACON** as summer progresses. So keep an eye on the evolution column for updates. Thank you. -Ed.

Critter Chronicles:

Deer Mice

House mice, deer mice, meadow mice, church mice, field mice, white footed mice, Mickey mice... er... mouse. Well, you get the idea.

Unless we get one in our home we seldom think about this multitude of miniature mammals, but in every sense of the word the world is awash in a sea of mice.

One of the most common mice in America is the deer mouse.

Despite the way we feel about them this miniscule mammal is literally a force of nature.

We often hear foods described as "tastes just like chicken" but when you think about how many animals depend on the lowly mouse it's a wonder everything doesn't taste just like rodent.

Seriously, the mouse is a very effective forager and therefore very efficient at concentrating nutrients in its body.

This tiny animal is the engine that drives many of nature's processes that we take for granted.

Deer mice breed every three to four weeks during the warmer months and less frequently during the winter producing on average 4 to 6 offspring but sometimes as many as 11 in one litter. Offspring reach sexual maturity in about 35 days.

Assuming a single female can reasonably be responsible for producing as few as 3 females per litter and do this every 35 days, one mouse could conceivably have over 265,000 progeny in just one year.

This sea of mice is a huge resource for many of the larger animals we know and love. Hawks, eagles, crows, cats, lynx, coyotes, wolves, owls, snakes, opossum, and even bear eat mice.

In addition to the animals that depend directly on the mouse as food there are many more animals that depend on the mouse for food.

Mice are hoarders of food and cache it away around their territories. Mice are omnivorous and will steal pet food and



photo courtesy: Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Deer mouse

Evolution:

It's Finally Here!

In our continuing evolution we strive to improve our services and expand the kinds of services we offer.

As announced in a previous addition of The Spinneret, this season we debut the addition of vegetation management to our line of services.

Got a gravel drive or walkway? Tired of pulling weeds or having to spray them? Can't find products to eliminate the really tough weeds like horse tail? Call for a free consultation and see how affordable it can be to reduce all that effort to a phone call.

One treatment. All Summer. Guaranteed.

Just say NO to weed!



**for driveway
and bare
ground**



Changes in the Office.

New software!

The most noticeable thing you will see to begin with is a new look to your invoices and statements but this will eventually lead to being able to manage your account on-line.

More importantly, this should immediately improve our ability to manage customer service and scheduling within the office.

In the future this will allow us to move computers into the service vehicles and allow technicians to have a complete history on each home they service including all inspections, correspondence and phone logs.

We will do everything we can to make the transition as smooth as possible but as with all best laid plans there may be bumps along the way.

If you encounter any problem with your service or your account please let us know promptly.

Critter Chronicles:

...continued

raid our cupboards (I've even seen them eat bars of soap for the tallow) but they feed mostly on seeds. Deer mice are such efficient gatherers that they often collect many times what they can eat.

Due to predators, mishaps and limited memory many of these stashes are lost or forgotten and eventually become nurseries for plants that rely on the mouse to spread their seeds.

In spite of these beneficial characteristics there is a dark side. Deer mice are the repository for Hantavirus (*Sin Nombre* virus). This virus appears to have been evolving along with the mouse and is endemic throughout its population which spans the entire U.S. with the exception of the gulf coast.

Hantavirus causes an illness in humans called *Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)* which has symptoms similar to pneumonia. About 1 person in 3 that contracts this infection dies from it.

Washington State Department of Health receives between 1 and 5 reported cases each year and has found that 14% of the animals they test carry the virus. So, for every 20 mice there are 3 that are infected. The distribution of the virus isn't uniform so there are pockets where all the animals carry it and pockets where none of the animals carry it.

Hantavirus is usually passed to humans through exposure to dust contaminated with urine or feces. Never use a vacuum cleaner or broom to clean up after mice. Soapy water or a solution of chlorine bleach misted onto contaminated surfaces will prevent dust from becoming air born and chlorine actually kills the virus.

(For additional information about hantavirus and avoiding infection see the Dept of Health fact sheet at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehsphi/factsheet/hanta.htm>)

There are three practices that will help reduce the likelihood of a deer mouse encounter.

Eliminate places for them to live by keeping plants, wood piles and stored items away from the foundation.

Eliminate places for them to eat by keeping grass cut. Don't feed birds or pets outside. Don't put table scraps on the mulch pile unless you use a sealed mulching container.

Exclude them from your home. Insure crawlspace entries, foundation vent screens, garage door seals, dryer vents and plumbing penetrations are in good repair. ■


Service Targets:

Current applications are focused on spiders, ants, sow bugs, earwigs and millipedes.

We use a combination of liquid products this time of year. In areas where carpenter ants are active Termidore (fipronil) is being applied to foundations. This product is highly effective against ants but has low impact on mammals.

For spiders and other crawling insects Suspend (deltamethrin) is being applied to siding and eaves.

We do guaranty the performance of our services.

If you have problems or questions regarding your service please call promptly. 

Creepy Crawlies:

Carpenter Ants.

Here in western Washington, carpenter ants are an annual right of spring. After a long winters nap they are starting to move around and many homeowners are already discovering these invaders.



Carpenter ants don't actually eat wood, they only damage it in the process of building a nest.

They feed mostly on aphids and scale bugs, milking them for honeydew, and these insects play a large role in explaining carpenter ant behavior.

Because insects like aphids feed on sap they are slaves to the plants they feed upon and the plants, in turn, are slaves to the seasons.

So, it goes something like this, plants move their sap into their roots for the winter, plant parasites can't get the sap so they lay eggs or go dormant, they aren't producing honeydew so the ants go dormant. The ants literally take a nap for the winter and most of the spring.

As spring approaches plants move their sap out of their roots, the plant parasites return and start producing honeydew and the carpenter ants wake up to tend their flocks.

Aphids and scale bugs are to carpenter ants what cows are to us and the ants will not only milk them but defend them from predators and move them from one plant to another.

Now in nature many insects have built in alarm clocks and carpenter ants are no exception but when they nest in a heated structure this can get thrown off kilter. If you see carpenter ants inside your home before May it is usually because there is a nest in the building. These ants are often still half asleep wandering around looking for water and sweets. If you do nothing at all you will stop seeing them indoors as they find sap feeding insects and establish feeding trails outdoors. This doesn't mean they are gone, just foraging outside. The colony will continue expanding in the building and if left untreated can do significant damage.

This time of year, aside from ants inside, you should be on the lookout for ants standing around on the foundation or decks. They can often be detected at corners of the foundation. Carpenter ants will avoid hiking over rough terrain and will trail along sidewalks, decks, landscape edging and garden hoses. Utility lines coming to your home can also provide a pathway for them especially if they pass through tree branches.

If you find these ants in your home between November and May it is a clear indicator that there is a nest in the structure.. Steps should be taken promptly to avoid damage.

Even though there are many products available over the counter for carpenter ant control, treatment for active infestations should be performed by trained, experienced people. The most effective materials are not available to the general public and no one has figured out how to put experience in a can. ■