

Cimex lectularius, bed bug. These insects are not known to transmit human pathogens. Photo copyright ITM

There are two main species of bed bugs: ***Cimex lectularius*** (the common bed bug which occurs world-wide) and ***Cimex hemipterus*** (the tropical bed bug). In West Africa, *Leptocimex bouetti* attacks man. Bed bugs are insects (4-7 mm) with rudimentary, non-functional wings. This limits their capacity for dispersion. They are not vectors of pathogenic organisms, but are primarily a nuisance because of their behaviour. They suck blood for a

short time during the night or at dawn. During the day the adult insects hide in cracks and crevices. Often dirty brown spots caused by their faeces are found on sheets, walls or floors. Sometimes clusters of hundreds of 1 mm large whitish-yellow eggs can be seen on walls, under wallpaper, etc. After a bite a severe pruritic skin reaction can occur.

Spraying insecticides helps control these animals. The problem of increasing insecticide resistance among bedbugs is getting worse. DEET has a repellent effect, but makes it that blood meals are often interrupted, therefore the insect will bite several times in order to get the same amount of blood. This means that this repellent is less than ideal. Aggressive and total extermination on an infestation is the only solution for infested premises. If this is unfeasible an alternative would be to take oral ivermectin and let the bugs bite the next night. Ivermectin is a neurotoxin for these insects and will kill them.