



BED BUGS

PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

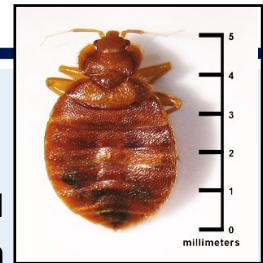
Bed bugs are a public health pest. Unlike most public health pests, bed bugs are not known to transmit or spread disease. A bedbug bite can cause red welts, intense itching, and secondary skin infections from scratching. A health officer should know the basics of bed bug control so they can respond to complaints, enforce rental and nuisance laws as appropriate, and reduce the chance that bug infestations will spread to other places in the community.

Applicable Laws

[RSA 48-A:14 RENTAL HOUSING STANDARDS](#)

[RSA 540 ACTIONS AGAINST TENANTS](#)

[RSA 147: PUBLIC HEALTH NUISANCES](#)



ROLE OF THE HEALTH OFFICER

Health officers can play an important role in bed bug detection and enforcement. They can conduct inspections and engage in enforcement actions in accordance with RSA 147 (Nuisances) and RSA 48A:14 (Minimum Housing Standards) for the infestation of pests. Enforcement of infestations can be different between cities and towns depending upon their applicable housing codes.

Additionally, the health officer can provide technical assistance regarding remediation options and should encourage the active participation and coordination of the tenant, landlord, and pest professional to ensure a comprehensive and effective response.

Health officers need to take special care when conducting inspections in places of infestation to assure that they do not carry that infestation back to their own homes. Here are some [recommendations for protecting yourself](#) during an inspection.

For more information

Email: healthofficer@dhhs.nh.gov or Visit: dhhs.nh.gov/HealthOfficer



ROLE OF THE LOCAL HEALTH OFFICER

BED BUG LAWS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

[RSA 48A](#) requires that rental properties conduct periodic inspection and eradication programs when the premises are infested by bed bugs. "Remediation" means action taken by the landlord that substantially reduces the presence of bed bugs in a dwelling unit for a period of at least 60 days. Health officers have the authority to enforce this statute in situations of non-compliance.

[RSA 540-A:3](#) clarifies responsibility during an infestation in a rental property. In summary, it is a violation for a landlord to willfully fail to investigate or fail to take measures to remediate an infestation within 7 days. A landlord must provide the tenant with written instructions for preparing the unit for remediation 72 hours in advance. It is a violation for tenants to willfully refuse to comply.

SAMPLE RESPONSE TO A REPORTED CONCERN.

1. **Contact** the landlord (if applicable) to inquire about the concern. Learn of any historical activities and ongoing remediation activities to date. You may request to see pest control records.
2. **Request** to complete an on-site inspection. You may also choose to conduct an inspection of the premises yourself. If you visit, your goal will be to gather evidence to determine if there is an issue and confirm if bed bugs are present
3. **Educate and provide resources** to the tenant and the landlord about bed bug management best practices. Sample resources can be found at the end of this document. Effective bed bug control is often a result of the shared actions between the tenant, landlord, and pest control company.
4. **Determine** if there is a housing code violation and engage in enforcement as appropriate. The health officer can require the landlord to pursue inspection and treatment with a licensed pest management company.

For more information

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ROLE OF THE LOCAL HEALTH OFFICER

INSPECTION TOOLS

In preparation for your inspection, gather the following materials:

- Notebook, or tablet to take notes. You can use [this sample inspection](#) form.
- A strong flashlight.
- A clear plastic zip-lock bag and a roll of clear tape to collect samples.
- A camera to record the living conditions, or to copy the landlord or pest professional's written documentation.
- Protective equipment to prevent bed bugs from coming home with you.
- A change of clothes for after the inspection.

Bed bugs are about the size of an apple seed and are visible with the naked eye. They are long and brown, with a flat, oval-shaped body, but can appear more

balloon-like if they have recently fed. Look for signs of rusty or brown colored staining on bed sheets or mattresses caused by bed bugs being crushed; dark spots which are the bed bugs excrement; and eggs or eggshells with pale, yellow skins. They can be found around the bed near the mattress or box spring piping, seams, and tags. and in the bedframe or head board cracks. If the room is heavily infested, you may also find bed bugs:

- In the seams of chairs, couches between cushions, the folds of curtains.
- In drawer joints, electrical receptacles and appliances.
- Under loose wallpaper and wall hangings and the junction of the wall and ceiling.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [EPA's Bed Bug Website](#)
- [603 Legal Aid: Bed Bug Laws in NH](#)
- [CDC Bed Bug Website](#)
- [Tackling Bed Bugs: A Starter Guide for Local Governments](#)

For more information

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ROLE OF THE LOCAL HEALTH OFFICER

REMIEDIATING BED BUGS

When a bed bug issue is identified there are multiple methods for controlling it. All methods take time and patience as there is no quick fix for eradication. **However, it is very important the landlord and tenant understand their responsibility to help reduce bed bug populations.** A pest control company's activity can be significantly amplified when a tenant or landlord also engage in 'do-it-yourself' methods such as:

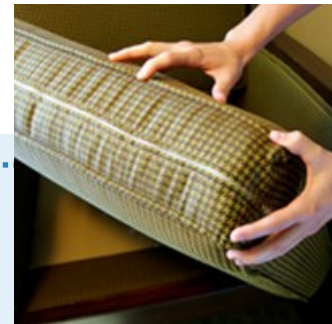
- [Reduce Clutter](#)
- [Make your Bed an Island](#)
- [Clean All Items in the Living Area](#)
- [Eliminate Bed Bug Habitats](#)

Hiring a professional who uses an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach is often the most effective strategy. A comprehensive IPM program to control bed bugs may include several non-chemical and chemical methods. Learn more:

·[Non-Chemical Methods](#)

·[Using Pesticides](#)

Bed bug control is most effective when an IPM approach is implemented with diligent participation by the residents. In multi-family housing, diligent participation is required of the building management.



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