

## Don't let bed bugs bite into your guests or your bottom line.

By Fiona Murphy, Technical Manager, Ecolab UK

A Bed Bug



**F**iona Murphy is the Technical Manager at the UK division of Ecolab, the world leader in cleaning, sanitising, food safety and infection control. Operating in more than 160 countries, Ecolab has 23,000 staff worldwide and global sales of over £2.5 billion. They have an £10 million annual R&D budget assigned to pest elimination and more than 200 R&D employees around the world.

One of the latest innovations to come out of Ecolab's research into bed bugs is a new and exclusive portable heat treatment for use on soft furnishings and furniture. It's small, discreet, fast and effective and uses electricity not diesel, so it's more environmentally friendly. There are also no unsightly and highly visible heat tubing and ducting as with other current heat systems.

Here Fiona tells you more about bed bugs, how to spot an infestation, how damaging it can be for your business and what you can do to remove the problem.

### Bed bugs are back

Over the last 50 years, bed bugs had become something of a rarity. However, in recent years there has been a global resurgence with increased numbers of bed bugs being reported in Asia, Europe, North America and Australia. In fact, national trends in the US show a 63% increase in bed bug numbers over past four years. Source: National Pest Management Association.

While London has seen a 25% year-on-year increase in bed bug infestations over the last five years alone. Source: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk).

These infestations can seem to come from nowhere. In fact, one of the biggest myths is that bed bugs are linked to unsanitary conditions. This is simply not true. A bed bug infestation can arise in any building, new or old, and even one with high standards of cleanliness. This is because bed bugs do not feed on food waste, dirt or the debris you'd associate with uncleanliness. They feed on blood. This means that any environment with a high turnover of warm-blooded hosts is a prime candidate for a bed bug infestation.

### Disastrous results

Clearly, a bed bug infestation can be disastrous for any hotel, guest house or B&B, resulting in rooms being taken out of service, and damage to a business's brand and reputation. If customers report that they have been bitten by bed bugs while staying at an establishment, the premises could soon draw the attention of the Environmental Health Officer too.

What's more, there's also the very costly risk of litigation, as one of London's top hotels discovered in 2006. A New York lawyer and his wife sued a luxury London hotel after they were bitten by bed bugs. The couple sought several million dollars in damages in a lawsuit in December 2006. They claimed they suffered hundreds of bites that left their skin red, swollen and itchy during a five-day stay at the 5-star hotel in May 2006. Source: [www.metro.co.uk](http://www.metro.co.uk).

### Bed bugs - Where they hide and how they multiply

Bed bugs (also known as cimex lectularius) and their relatives are a small group of ectoparasites which need a blood meal to complete their lifecycles. They are found in private homes, hotels, guest houses, B&Bs, hostels and more. If left uncontrolled, they can quickly become established and breed rapidly.

They are carried from location to location in clothing, travelling bags and suitcases, laundry, second-hand beds and furniture. They hide in crevices and cracks such as seams, buttons, pictures, plug sockets, electrical equipment and behind loosened wallpaper. Hiding during the day and feeding at night, a female can lay between 200 and 500 eggs in batches of 10 to 50 in areas where the insects hide. The young hatch between four and 28 days later, depending upon room temperature.

### How to get rid of bed bugs

Bed bugs are by far one of the most difficult indoor pests to eradicate. However, Ecolab have considerable technical expertise, thanks to a £10 million annual R&D budget and dedicated R&D experts who carry out university-level research focused on bed bugs.

This research has been used to develop a proven treatment programme which has successfully treated more than 130,000 rooms in the past three years alone. Thorough inspections are a key element of this programme, as bed bugs can spread rapidly along pipework and ducting in all directions: both up and down and from side to side.

### Did you know?

- Bed bugs often feed between 3am and 5am
- **Bed bugs produce alarm pheromones when disturbed**
- Bed bugs were at one time common on trains, in cars and cinemas as well as hotels
- **Bed bugs have sensors on their bodies that are sensitive to temperature changes to help them find warm bodies in the dark**
- In cooler temperatures, bed bugs can survive up to a year without feeding
- **When travelling, during the middle ages English nobles are reported to have put a pig or piglet in their beds before sleeping, so that the bed bugs are satiated and less likely to feed on them**