PEST CONTROL BULLETIN NO. 14
FALSE CHINCH BUG

Nysius raphanus (Howard)

NYMPH ACTUAL SIZE   ADULT ACTUAL SIZE
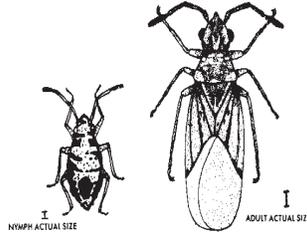
GENERAL INFORMATION

The homeowner or gardener is often alarmed when he finds the ground swarming with minute, active, grayish to reddish brown bugs which usually appear in late spring or early summer. When swarming in large numbers, it appears that the ground is moving, usually in one direction. These insects are often found to be the false chinch bug. The adult bugs average about one-eighth inch long and one-twelfth inch wide with a dull gray body, mostly dark beneath, and half covered with whitish wings. The young (nymphs) are smaller and wingless or with wing pads, and have a reddish brown abdomen.

HABITS & DAMAGE

These bugs do not bite or sting humans. Many types of insects are attracted to perfume or perfumed lotions. If insects are squashed against the skin, it may cause a burning feeling for a short time. As far as is known, these insects do not carry disease. It then becomes largely a psychological problem of seeing masses of minute, swarming bugs on the property. In the late winter or early spring the females deposit their eggs in the surface cracks of the soil in weed and grass areas. When the young hatch, they feed almost exclusively on grasses and weeds. When warm weather occurs in the spring and drought prevails, the weeds dry up or mature and the bugs scatter to irrigated plants around the home, and congregate in large numbers. Plants on which the bugs remain may be sucked almost dry and wilt. Fortunately, as the bugs finish their feeding and become adults, they will usually disperse within a few days to two weeks and will not reappear unless the same habitat is present next spring. Occasionally the bugs may swarm up to six weeks. Before the bugs become adults and are searching for moist foliage, they may enter the home, causing considerable concern, especially where babies and small children are present.

PREVENTION

Infestations of false chinch bugs may be prevented by spraying vacant undeveloped areas with insecticides and by treating these areas with herbicides to prevent growth of weeds and grasses, or by discing and destroying weeds early in the spring before they become a fire hazard. When swarming starts, keep the grass along the edge of the lot and around the house watered down to the point of leaving puddles. Turning on the sprinkler system for 5 to 15 minutes each hour should be adequate.

CONTROL

Insecticides are usually not effective unless used over a wide area. Temporary control may be achieved through the use of contact or residual insecticide sprays. Be certain that the insecticide used is registered for false chinch bug control on the label. Do not spray after dark as these bugs hide in cracks in the soil and under debris and may not be killed by the spray. Treatment during the warm part of the day when the bugs are very active is most effective.

Mechanical destruction of the weeds when dry usually serves to disperse the bugs more quickly. Many cities have done limited chinch bug control. Contact your city for further information.

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This information is provided to help homeowners with their pest problems. Insecticides may be purchased at nurseries, hardware, farm supply, and pet stores. If additional help is needed, contact with a licensed pest control operator is suggested.

No endorsement of trade names or products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

PRECAUTIONS

1. Handle insecticides with care and follow instructions on the label.
2. Do not use around open flame or exposed foods, and always clean food preparation areas after the use of pesticides.
3. Store out of reach of children and pets, preferably in locked cabinets.
4. Never keep pesticides in anything other than the original container.
5. Never reuse the pesticide container to store any other materials.
6. Dispose of all empty containers by placing them in the trash can for removal to the local disposal area.