



HEADLINE NEWS

Industry Veteran Wendell's Perspective on Bed Bug Dogs

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Bern Wendell, manager, education and training, for Arrow Exterminating, Long Island, N.Y., submitted the following article, which provides a brief bed bug history, as well as his perspective on the use of bed bug dogs

Editor's note: Bern Wendell, manager, education and training, for [Arrow Exterminating](#), Long Island, N.Y., submitted the following article, which provides a brief bed bug history, as well as his perspective on the use of bed bug dogs.

"Sleep tight, don't let the bedbugs bite" was advice given to me regularly as a child by my parents when they tucked me into my bed. I wasn't sure how I could stop bugs from biting while I was asleep, and I had no idea what a bed bug was anyway. Since I was never bitten by a bed bug as a child, holding still under the covers seems to have worked! Perhaps there were no bed bugs in Philly in 1953.

In fact, by the end of World War II bedbugs were largely eradicated, but they have made a tremendous resurgence since the late 1990s. In fact, bed bug infestations have reached epidemic proportions in the entire New York area. Bed bugs nest in almost anything, not just beds. They are exceptional at hiding and are very difficult to find, even for an experienced pest management professional. You have heard of drug, bomb and termite detection dogs, now mans' best friend is also a weapon used in the war against bed bugs. Bed bug detecting dogs are being used more and more during the inspection phase to verify the presence of live bugs and during the follow up stage to assure the problem has been eliminated. You may ask yourself if dogs are more effective than a pest management professional at finding bed bugs, how accurate are the dogs, do you need to hire a professional bed bug dog, will the dog pee on my carpets, and how much does the service cost? There are of course many other questions you may also be pondering. Some of those answers will be found in this article.

First of all, if you are considering hiring a bed bug dog detection service, verify that the dog is certified by the National Entomology Scent Detection Canine Association (NESDCA) and are trained by a nationally recognized organization. Anyone can hang out a shingle and advertise their "bed bug dog" since there is no government agency that certifies their effectiveness. Also remember that there is the potential for people to obtain a certified bed bug dog from a certified trainer but handle them improperly or fail to maintain their training.

The quality of the dog depends on the efficiency of their training. We know that bed bug dogs can detect bed bugs. We also know that it doesn't always work for various reasons.

If you know you have bed bugs due to the sighting of live bed bugs, you do not need to hire a dog to tell you that you have bed bugs. A dog is most valuable when the human inspector cannot find any bed bugs but the customer is still complaining of bites. The human inspector uses his eyes in conjunction with his brain while the dog uses olfaction (smell) rather than vision. In addition, dogs can tell the difference between live bed bugs and their viable eggs and fecal deposits, cast skins and dead bed bugs, and they can even detect one live bed bug or viable egg in the inspection area.

Let's answer some of those questions. Which is more effective, a dog or a person? The most often cited percentages given in current literature are approximately 95% effectiveness for the dogs but less than 30% for a human's inspection. Remember that efficacy depends on the dog, the handler, environmental conditions, and the individual human doing the inspection. They sometimes do not find bed bugs when present and can even produce a false positive when there are no bed bugs present at all. Do you need to hire a professional bed bug dog provider? Well, not if you actually see bed bugs, but yes if you are getting bitten and suspect bed bugs even though no one has been able to find even one bed bug. Another good reason to hire a bed bug dog would be after you have been treated for bed bugs and would like assurance that the treatment was successful. Will the dog pee on my carpet? Probably not, but there is no guarantee that they won't get excited and need to relieve themselves immediately while inspecting your house. How much do they cost? That of course depends on the size of the area to be inspected. The dogs and handlers are commonly priced according to the amount of time spent on each inspection. A "normal" house can cost between \$600 and \$800 for a complete inspection and report.

A few important facts to remember include:

- Bedbug dogs do not actually do anything to bedbugs
- Clutter is a bedbug's best friend and a pest managements professionals' worst nightmare
- If a single female bed bug survives an extermination, her eggs could re-infest the space
- Bedbugs have never been proven to transmit disease
- A bed bug can go for more than a year without a blood meal
- A bedbug dog inspection is usually faster than a human inspection
- A single disciplined dog is better than a cross-trained dog.
- Discarding the bed is rarely the solution since bed bugs readily disperse away from beds
- Temperature, cleaners, smoke, pesticides and air flow can alter the inspection findings
- The dog is only a tool which is used in conjunction with vacuuming, bedding encasements, steam, and application of pesticides to eliminate an infestation.
- After application of pesticides in a structure, you should wait thirty days before bringing a dog into that structure to inspect for bed bugs