

Dr. Bug's Bugbytes

by ROBERT CAMERON



Critters in the hot tub

The next time you're relaxing in the hot tub, remember that you may not be alone. Hot tubs provide an ideal environment for a number of unwanted guests and I don't mean those who come with their own towel. The area inside a hot tub is warm, has sources of moisture, is dark and is often inaccessible. This is prime territory for ants, wasps and mice.

Every year we get calls for one or more of these pests infesting hot tubs. Carpenter ants are quite at home inside hot tubs. They will nest in the insulation, get moisture from condensation around the pipes and forage for food in the yard around the hot tub area. If the tub is placed on a deck they will

sometimes infest some of the deck beams, especially if there are signs of wood rot. Small ants often nest in the ground under hot tubs that are not raised on decks. The ants will then migrate up into and around the tub.

Yellow jackets are good at finding small openings in the sides of hot tubs. These can be challenging to eliminate if the tubs are set into raised decks. It often involves crawling into confined areas under the deck to try to get at the nest. Paper wasps can also be a problem if they nest in the motor housing compartment.

The most potentially destructive hot tub terrorists are mice. Most service people who work on

tubs can tell you horror stories of damage from rodents. Mice often get into the motor/pump compartment. They are quite comfortable nesting in the insulation. They can chew on both the wiring and water lines, or up through the insulation in the bottom of a hot tub where they are again able to chew into water lines.

Inspect your hot tubs each season with a view to keeping out pests. Seal gaps and small openings that will allow wasps to become established. Watch for ant activity around the tub in the summer season. If you are planning to install a new hot tub, have a panel or trap door put in to give access to the undersides of the tub. With fall not

far off, place rodenticides inside the motor compartment or access panel. Use the small bags and do not cut them open. This will help prevent the bait from becoming mouldy. Check them periodically over the winter. Remember to place the rodenticides only where they are inaccessible to children and dogs. You can also place snap traps or one of the smaller multiple catch traps if there is room in the compartment.

Happy hot tubbing but remember... you may not be alone.

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