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Contractor's Corner

WITH RICK THOMAS



Dear Mr. Contractor

My partner and I have recently purchased a new home. We had the builder finish the basement for us. Lately we have noticed black mould on the baseboard in the basement. My partner thinks it's a basement leak, yet we see no signs of water. Could you please advise us on this matter.

Paul and Ted


Dear Guys

Seems to me what you have there is a high humidity and condensation problem. The hot, humid air and the cool basement air cause condensation. To rid yourself of this problem reduce the humidity level in your new home, place a dehumidifier in your basement and empty it often. Enjoy your new place.

Rick

PS To kill your mildew, mix 4 litres water with 4 litres household bleach, and 2 tbsp of TSP (trisodium phosphate). Be careful not to bleach fabrics or carpeting.

Contractor's Corner runs again on August 26, please email your questions to askacontractor@yahoo.ca



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ALL THE COMFORTS OF HOME & GARDEN

Low income housing gets breaks for low energy appliances

Low Rise Rental Properties REEP Rewards for Energy Efficiency Upgrades

BY ANN KORNUA

The Federal government's home energy efficiency retrofit grant is now extended to rental properties. Previously, only owner occupied and unsubsidized residences could be rewarded for improving their efficiency through the EnerGuide for Houses (EGH). Ignored was rental housing stock where energy demand and CO2 emissions can be reduced.

"Property owners, as well as private homeowners, will now be able to get more for their renovation dollar," Minister for Natural Resources Canada John Efford announced on June 23rd.

"Providing incentives for the improvement of rental properties encourages urban renewal, keeping neighbourhoods vibrant. Plus, reducing the dollars leaving our region to pay for energy means more money is available to fuel local economies," says Don Eaton, Executive Director of the Elora Center for Environmental Excellence, originator of the REEP program.

Property owners can use the services of the Halton Residential Energy Efficiency Project to establish a baseline EGH rating, perform upgrades, get the follow up rating and apply for a grant. That grant is based on the degree of improvement in efficiency from the pre and post-retrofit ratings.

Assisted housing operators are not eligible for the retrofit grant, but can be reimbursed for EGH evaluations performed at \$100 per dwelling and up to \$50,000 in total. Upgrades include installing ENERGY STAR qualified high efficiency furnaces with a direct incentive back up to \$100 per unit.

The benefits will be savings on monthly energy bills, protection of the environment, economy and taking action on the climate change.

dr. bug's bugbytes



BY ROBERT CAMERON

Beer Bugs

The scourge of the backyard barbeque and happy hour on the deck are insects commonly called 'beer bugs' or sometimes 'picnic bugs'. These pests seem to love beer and other beverages and happily dive bomb into waiting glasses. Beer bugs are small beetles belonging to a larger group called Sap Beetles. These beetles feed on a wide variety of fruits and vegetables and can cause severe damage to crops when numbers are high.

Beer bugs are about 5-8 mm (1/4 inch) long, dark in colour with two noticeable yellow spots on each wing cover. For such a small beetle, it has the improbable name of *Glischrochilus quadrisignatus*; try throwing that name out at the dinner table. They do not appear to be strong fliers as they often crash land on dinner plates or into wine glasses, but research has shown that the beetles can be attracted for up to 300 meters by odours from food sources. Adult beetles usually start appearing in mid June and peak in numbers between mid-July and early August. Food preferences include raspberries, strawberries, tomatoes and sweet corn. Ripe fruit that has cracks or damage from birds and other insects is often targeted.

Country homes that are surrounded by corn fields often have a bigger problem with beer bugs than houses in town. In the spring, the over-wintering females will deposit eggs in decomposing ears of corn left over from the previous fall. Once the life cycle is completed, newly emerged adults will seek out immature sweet corn. Damaged ears of corn can have 200-400 beetles per ear, one count found 3761 beetles on a single ear of corn.

Since beer bugs are primarily an agricultural pest, control is difficult around the house. The best method is to make up traps that will attract the beetles and place them away from where you will be sitting. Use traps such as those designed for fruit flies or wasps.

Many different types of baits will work, but some that have proven effective include fresh beer, sliced bananas which may be good for up to a week, and 2 day old sliced immature sweet corn (it is not nearly as effective when freshly sliced). Beer has to be replenished daily (whether for the beetles or researchers I'm not sure). Make sure that you place the traps far enough away to avoid attracting the beetles to where you are sitting.

Roll out... those days of soda and pretzels and beer bugs.

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