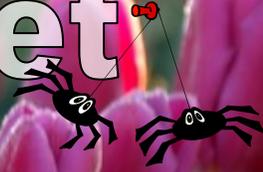


# The Spinneret

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Yahoo! Spring again! Now I can put away the snowboard and polish up the motorcycle.

This episode of the Spinneret is directed at describing how your Pest control technicians go about the business of staying ahead of pests and protecting your health and property on a daily basis. Additionally, we're going to get into the crawlspace under your home and look into things that are happening in there.

It's a bit of a departure from previous newsletters but I think you will find it informative. -Ed.

## The Bug Guy:

You've seen us in the movies, the dim witted, kind of weird character wearing nondescript coveralls, carrying a spray can, dispensing green or yellow goo, surrounded by a chemical fog. You know, the one that can tell the difference between a reptile and an amphibian by smell alone.

Maybe you or a neighbor have a pest service and you've seen a technician using a sprayer while servicing a home.



Certainly you have seen at least one news story or environmental advertisement decrying the use of pesticides.

Have you ever considered what goes into the making of a pest control technician?

Just how hard can it be? Anybody can carry a hose! It's not exactly rocket science!

Well, not exactly. But it is a science.

So, let's take a look at some of the hats a technician has to wear.

To borrow from medical parlance, pest control technicians are like general practitioners. We can identify and treat a broad range of afflictions but we need to know when to call in specialists. In this analogy those would be plumbers, electricians and contractors.

**Inspector:** First and foremost, a good pest control technician must be a good inspector. You need to know where to look and what to look for.

**Diagnostician:** You must be able to determine, from the evidence available, the cause of damage and plan an effective course of action.

**Entomologist:** Every one expects us to treat for "bugs" so it's obvious we have to know how to identify insects.

**Forensic entomologist:** Most of the time we get insect samples that contain only part of an insect or the remains of one that has been mashed. Often we are presented with damage but not the pest that caused it. Frequently, pest samples provided have nothing to do with the damage found.

**Scatologist:** You do have to know your doo doo in this business. Sometimes the best evidence of a pest is its droppings (scat).

**Continued...**

## The Honey Do List:

This is the time of year when ants start raiding kitchens and baths.

Don't wait until there are dozens! It's important to contact us promptly for service as soon as the first ones show up.

The earlier we start the sooner they are gone. ■

### Uninvited Guests?...



**...Send 'em packing.**

## Into The Crawlspace:

You know it's down there. It's dark, damp, cold and claustrophobic. There are spider webs and who knows what else down there and chances are, there's no amount of money that could make you go in there.

Unless your home is built on a concrete slab, many of the systems that make your home livable pass through the crawlspace underneath. If they aren't inspected regularly things can go expensively wrong. So many of those things are pest related that it should come as no surprise that pest control focuses so much attention there.

It's advisable to have a pest technician check under your home at least every three years to catch pest problems early.

So, let's see what's going on down there and what we look for.



Animal activity is one of the most common problems for crawlspaces. Every animal that will live in a crawlspace will use it as a litter box. Raccoons and cats can destroy insulation and heating ducts. Rodents do more than damage insulation. They will chew through wiring and plastic plumbing. Many electrical fires can be attributed to rodents getting electrocuted in walls. Ductwork and insulation contaminated with feces and urine often have to be replaced because there is no effective way to clean them.

**Continued...**

**Wildlife manager:** We have to recognize conditions that can change wildlife into pests and how to manage them.

**Animal behaviorist:** Sometimes an animal just won't jump into a trap or leave a structure and has to be coerced.

**Contractor:** There are hundreds of different kinds of construction and new materials and techniques emerge every year. We have to have a general understanding of them to know where to attack a problem. Occasionally we need to make repairs or guide contractors to solve pest problems.

**Forensic contractor:** Contractors don't always execute plans the way the architect intended. Sometimes architects design problems into structures. We have to be able to identify when construction contributes to pests.

**Landscaper:** Many pests start out living in the yard. Some of the things we do in our yards can attract pests, others can discourage them.

**Environmentalist:** We have to insure our practices do not adversely affect the environment for future generations.

**Chemist:** We need to select which materials to apply that will be effective and when and where to apply them. We also need to know what precautions to take and what to do if something goes horribly wrong like a product spill or accidental ingestion.

**Psychologist:** We have to help clients avoid making decisions about pests based on irrational fear. Occasionally people overact to pests or become fixated on the wrong pest issue, like treating for spiders while ignoring rodents.

Sometimes we need to help clients suffering from health problems that they believe are pest related. Some medications can cause itching, tingling or rashes that have nothing to do with pests.

**Lawyer:** Every pesticide label is a legal document subject to enforcement. The difference between legal applications from one product to another can be subtle but the legal ramifications can be dramatic. Many labels change from year to year.

**Meteorologist:** Weather is a significant factor affecting pest activity and the type of application that can be made.

**Teacher:** Often the cause of pest problems are the result of things we choose to do, like putting up bird feeders. Educating homeowners often solves pest problems without having to resort to treatment.

**Magician:** Yup. Whatever you do has to eliminate 100% of the pests, must not injure any other organism, must be non-toxic, may not leave any visible residue, and have no odor.

Yes, a good pest control technician wears a lot of hats. There are more like salesman, neighbor relations counselor, mechanic, secretary, psychic...

But I wouldn't want to put too fine of a point on it. ■

## Service Targets:

Current applications are focused on ants and sow bugs. Ground level applications of granules are the principal preventive application being made at this time.

These granules require water to be activated and provide better protection than sprays under wet conditions.

Vegetation treatments for weeds are being performed for those on our "Bare Ground" program.

We do guaranty the performance of our services.

If you have questions regarding any of our services please call promptly. ■

Animals often enter the crawlspace right through the access door. Often homeowners and contractors leave them off or the opening is not secured when the home is built.

They enter through foundation vents which are screened when the home is built but rust out over time. They will also enter around plumbing and utilities that pass through foundation walls.

Is your garage attached to your home? A poorly adjusted door can allow animals into the crawlspace on many homes.

If your home has a bay window or fireplace enclosure, contractors often forget to cover the underside of these with a plywood panel allowing animals to go over the foundation wall.

Damaged, modified or poorly installed foundations are also common.

Finally, if the foundation footing isn't buried deep enough, they will dig right under the foundation.

Insect pests and decay fungus (rot, dry rot) are also common. Most floors are made of wood that can be eaten by insects and rot under the right conditions. In most cases a water source is required so we are constantly on the lookout for it.

Is there an intact layer of plastic covering the soil? One square yard of soil can release 4 quarts of water vapor a day.

Do you block your foundation vents? Blocked foundation vents trap moisture under your home.

Is your dryer or stove exhaust blowing into the crawlspace? A typical load of laundry contains 2 gallons of water.

An inch of rain will deliver 600 gallons of water on 1000 square feet of roof. Is the water from the downspouts draining away from the foundation?

Windows and doors can leak without leaving visible evidence anywhere except the subfloor. The longer this goes undetected the more it will cost to repair.

Lastly, has something been left in the crawlspace that makes your home vulnerable to pests? Wood or cardboard foundation forms from the building process make great termite bait and if structural wood is touching the soil it will not only attract termites but it will eventually rot.

This is just a sample of what your pest professional is looking out for.

Don't expect utility repairmen to be able to tell you if you have pests. Asking the plumber if you have pests is like asking your dentist if you need glasses. ■

