



**Backpacker Operators
Alliance of Victoria**

SUGGESTIONS FOR COMBATING BED BUGS

Bed bugs affect all accommodation providers. From backpacker hostels to 5 star hotels, these pests do not discriminate. An infestation is not related to cleanliness. Thorough vacuuming and regular checks can help prevent outbreaks, but the bugs build their community so quickly (eggs hatch in 10 days) that complete elimination is near impossible.

Take every case seriously. Managers must be vigilant and thorough through the whole process, and act immediately.

Sometimes guest complaints can be mosquito bites, a flea bite, reaction from the sea or other allergy but all cases should be thoroughly investigated. Bed bug bites are almost always in trails or groups of three or more. They can be anywhere on the body but most bites appear on the top half of the body as well as on the arms, legs or back.

Bedbugs look a little like a small light brown apple seed and grow up to 5mm in length. A well fed mature bug has a reddish brown colour.



WHAT ARE THE TELL TALE SIGNS OF BED BUGS?

- small drops or smears of blood on the sheets.

- little black spots of ink (about the size of a pin head) on the mattress, fittings, carpets rails etc. These are actually their droppings and are the most likely sign you will notice first.
- eggs (the size of grains of sugar) attached to areas as above.

ENSURE YOU HAVE A GOOD TORCH OR LOTS OF LIGHT TO INSPECT THE ROOM

Undoubtedly the most common area bed bugs nest is in the seams of mattresses, but can commonly be found in carpet rails, curtains, bed frames, light fittings, picture frames or any cracks or crevices in the room and are usually found in bottom bunk beds.

When searching, be as careful as possible to not disturb areas they may be in. Lift items slowly and use your torch to carefully scan the area.

If you find a bug, don't panic. These little critters are stealthy but not aggressive. They hate being disturbed and are slow moving when exposed to light. They are rarely interested in biting you during the day.

A good quality vacuum with a disposable bag can be very helpful in removing bugs before treatment. The bugs are not strong enough to hold on when the pipe is placed over them and the nozzle can be used to scrape off and suck up eggs. Vacuum bags should be placed into plastic bags, tied up and disposed of.

All bed linen, towels, and guest's clothing should be put into large plastic bags and washed in commercial clothes washing

systems on the hot cycle. Backpacks, pillows, shoes etc can be placed in a freezer for 24 hours which will kill bugs and eggs. Be careful to tie bags up so as none of the little critters fall out enroute to the laundry.

Make sure the infected room is kept locked until the treatment commences. Avoid letting other staff into the room in case they transport any loose bugs into another room.

Curtains or blinds in the room? Remove them, pop them in a sealed plastic bag, and into the deep freeze for at least 24 hours.

Take the mattresses off the beds, pull bunks away from the wall, take pictures off the wall, take drawers out of bed side tables and lean them up against each other.

Guests need to wash all clothing that they possess.

YOU ARE NOW READY FOR TREATMENT.

BOAV recommends you contacting a licensed pest controller. An average sized 6 bed dorm can cost \$200 – \$500 to treat. A follow up treatment 2 – 4 weeks after is generally required for effective treatment.

The mattress is the most likely place that an infestation will occur. If the nest is large, after treatment the mattress should ideally be discarded.

If there are only minor signs of an outbreak the mattress should be put into storage for at least three months.