Kansas State University Extension Entomology Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants, Extension Personnel & Homeowners

Department of Entomology
123 West Waters Hall
K-State Research and Extension
Manhattan, Kansas 66506
785-532-6154
http://blogs.k-state.edu/kansasbugs/
http://www.entomology.ksu.edu/extension

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News Corner

- House Centipede

NEWS CORNER

House Centipede

We have received several inquiries regarding house centipede, *Scutigera coleoptrata,* adults present in homes. Although the house centipede is not harmful to humans, the mere presence of these "large" centipedes moving around in the house is disturbing to most people. The house centipede is native to Mexico and is present throughout the USA. House centipede adults are 1 to 2 inches (25.4 to 50.8 millimeters) in length, and brown-yellow with long, slender antennae (Figure 1). They have 15 pairs of long legs on both sides of the body. The last pair are longer than twice the body length. The legs have alternating

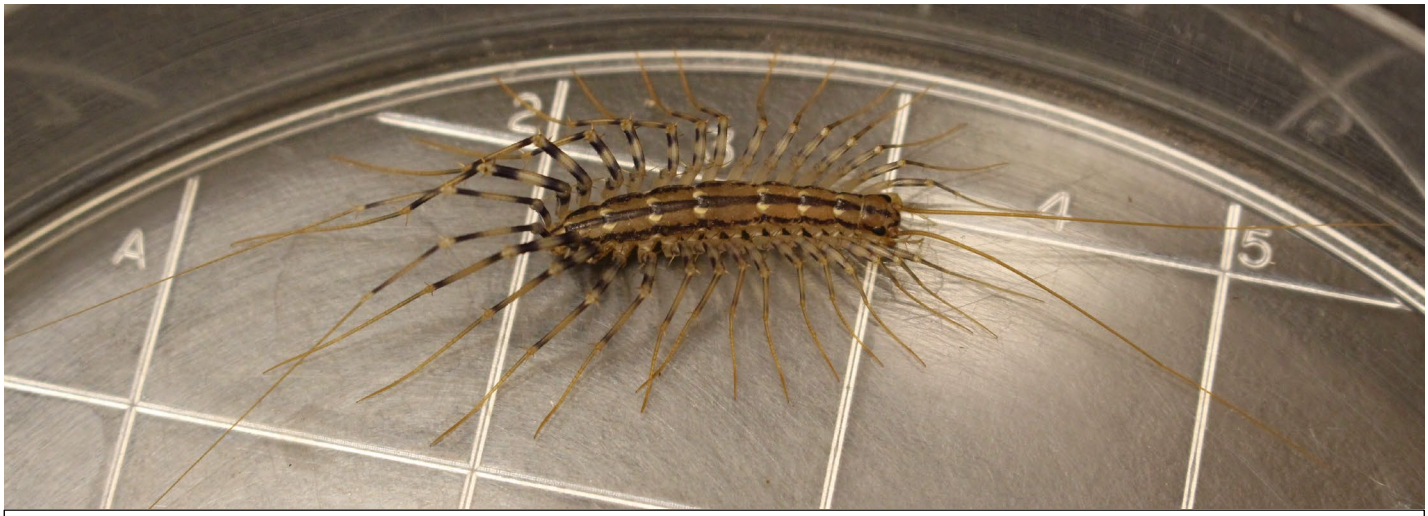

Figure 1. House centipede adult (Raymond Cloyd).

light and dark bands. In addition, three dark stripes extend the length of the body. The house centipede life stages include an egg, larva, and adult. There are six larval instars (stages between each molt) and four-post larval instars before the house centipede becomes an adult. Newly emerged (eclosed) larvae have four pairs of legs and the number of legs increases with each successive molt. Females can lay up to 35 eggs over several days, with up to 150 eggs produced during their lifespan.

Figure 2. House centipede adult captured on sticky board (Raymond Cloyd).

House centipedes may be found outdoors under logs, rocks, and tree bark. They may be found in homes located in moist habitats with a high relative humidity, such as, basements, sump pumps, and bathrooms. House centipedes are active at night in search of food. They also can be observed during the day moving rapidly along walls, baseboards, and floors searching for food. House centipedes feed on arthropods (e.g. insects and mites), including: silverfish, firebrats, carpet beetle larvae, cockroaches, and spiders. House centipedes are primarily a nuisance in homes although their presence indicates that other arthropods are located in the house. House centipedes overwinter outdoors in protected habitats.

House centipede management includes: 1) reducing their food source, which will diminish the number inside the home, 2) placing sticky boards along baseboards and walls (Figure 2), 3) cleaning up clutter in the home and outside, 4) sealing openings on the outside of homes, and 5) reducing the relative humidity inside the home by using a dehumidifier (Figure 3) or fan. Do not apply insecticides inside the home to manage house centipede populations.

Figure 3. A dehumidifier will reduce the relative humidity in the house (Raymond Cloyd).

Raymond Cloyd – Horticultural Entomology/Plant Protection

Sincerely

Raymond A. Cloyd
Professor and Extension Specialist
Horticultural Entomology/Plant Protection
Phone: 785-532-4750
Fax: 785-532-6232
e-mail: rcloyd@ksu.edu

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