

Stink Bugs in the House

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As cool weather arrives, the brown marmorated stink bug, (BMSB), will become a nuisance indoors for many homeowners. It is an invasive insect not native to North America. They feed on a wide range of tree fruits and seedpods as well as many vegetables. For homeowners, it is mainly a nuisance pest, invading houses looking for a place to over-winter.

The BMSB is a grayish brown shield-backed bug about 3/4 inch long with white bands on the antennae and legs, alternating black and white spots on the abdomen, and no spines on the front of the thorax. It overwinters in the adult stage in protected places including houses but does not lay eggs in the house. In the spring, adults leave the overwintering site.

Household Control

Homes with a history of having stink bug infestations inside need to take preventative measures to prevent re-infestation in the fall. Seal up cracks around windows, doors, utility access points, chimneys, siding, trim, and fascia. Caulk can be used to seal many cracks, but attic and foundation vents, and weep holes will require wire mesh or screening. Do not seal cracks if the insects are already inside because they will be trapped and die indoors.

Control stink bugs before they get inside: Spot treatments using a microencapsulated or wettable powder insecticides can be applied in the early fall around windows, doors, attic vents and other locations on the south and west walls of the structure. The size of the building may prevent access points that are high off the ground from being treated, so screening and caulking from the interior will still be necessary. Note that all insecticide applications have to be carefully timed. Applying too early will allow the insecticide to degrade before the stink bugs begin to come in.

Control after they get inside: Caulk around baseboards and exhaust fans, light fixtures, and trim to prevent stink bugs from accessing interior rooms from basements, drop ceilings and attics. Vacuuming best controls individual insects. Stink bugs killed with insecticide still have to be vacuumed. so skip the insecticide and go straight to the vacuum. Avoid treating stink bugs you cannot reach with the vacuum. If they die inside the wall or attic dead stink bugs can lead to infestations of other pests that feed on the stink bug carcasses.

(Adapted from VCE Fact Sheet "Brown Marmorated Stink Bug")