



Bird Mites and What You Can Do to Reduce Infestation

By Ken Birch

Bird mites commonly infest bedrooms and bathrooms, but due to their number they can quickly infect an entire house and spread into carpets, bedding, furniture and clothing. When not active, the mites hide in darkened areas such as cracks and crevices, though they tend to congregate where humans often are - such as on the TV room couch, near the computer or in the car.

Essentially they are attracted to new hosts such as humans through their receptors designed to pick up moisture and heat.



What are Bird mites?

Often incorrectly called “bird lice”, bird mites are found all over the world. As their name suggests these creatures live and feed mostly on birds and can also live within their nests. They are found in moist or humid conditions, often found either on birds or in bird nesting materials during spring and early summer.

Bird mites can grow up to about 2mm in length. With four pairs of legs and no antennae, adult bird mites are mostly transparent, and only gain a black or red colour after they have fed on blood. Naturally, bird mites tend to be most active during bird nesting periods.

Aggressive and parasitic, bird-mites require blood to reproduce. Multiplying quickly, a bird-mite infestation can often leave people feeling overwhelmed.

What you can do to lower the risk of infestation

The first obvious place for bird mites to get in is on birds that have entered a building from in the roof. Here are a few helpful tips to stop possible infestation of these troublesome parasites.

- Remove the source for mites.
- Remove bird nesting material to a more suitable outside location.
- Treat, reduce or eliminate any rodent population.
- Repair broken tiles, timber and other entry points to prevent roof access.
- Make roosting sites and window ledges unattractive to bird roosting.

There are different solutions to control bird mite infestation depending on your problem and its extent. By following the steps listed above you should significantly reduce the risk of parasite activity in your home or office.

Before undertaking any serious treatments, it's advisable to consult a trained specialist, as they will undertake a thorough assessment of your particular problem and offer solutions that best fit your unique situation.

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How do bird mites affect people?

People are most commonly exposed to bird mites when birds enter office blocks or homes to nest. Once these birds and their chicks leave or die, the remaining mites (often tens of thousands) leave the nesting area in search of new hosts as a food source. Bird mites can rapidly generate large populations, and have a life cycle of between 7-10 days.

Bird mites feed on the blood of the birds whose nests and skin they infest, however unlike ticks, they cannot survive on human blood and will not infect human skin.

They do, however, leave a nasty bite

Their ‘test-biting’ on humans, while searching for a new bird host, involves the mite injecting saliva into the skin. This can cause severe irritation, rashes and itching, with secondary infections not uncommon due to scratching of the bites.