

Good Bug or Bad Bug.

Ladybugs aren't really "bugs" at all, as entomologists--scientists who study insects--use the term. They are actually beetles. Bugs are a different category of insect, such as chinch bugs, stink bugs, etc., all falling under the category of "true bugs."

Multicolored Asian lady beetles, naturally found in China, Russia, Korea and Japan, were introduced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a biological control of plant infesting insects from the 1960s to 1990s, reducing the need for pesticides. Although large numbers were released in western and southern states some claim the current infestations originated from beetles that migrated on a freighter from Japan and docked in New Orleans.

According to the Ohio Pest Control Association most members of the lady beetle family are regarded as harmless, beneficial insects. Unlike termites or carpenter ants they do not damage or feed on anything in the home. There have been reports of allergies ranging from eye irritation to asthma associated with these insects, but they are not disease carriers. The larger species are capable of nipping the skin (It doesn't happen often.), but they are incapable of stinging, nor will they breed indoors.

By resolution of the legislature lady beetles are "Ohio's Official Insect," and most people like--or at least are indifferent to--them until their numbers increase to the point where they become a nuisance. Good bugs (or beetles), even the official state insect, crawling, flying, and dying in the living area of a home isn't a good situation.

Lady beetles will over winter in natural settings, as well as in buildings, in areas prone to infestation. During the fall they enter homes through cracks, crevices, under doors or any potential entrance to find a suitable location to hibernate, and they may do this in huge numbers.

The first signs of warmth, even in January, can get them stirred up again. When this starts to occur they often find themselves indoors wanting to go out of doors. This is why they are often found clustered on windows with dead insects littering the sill and the floor below those same windows. Depending on population size and temperature it can take many weeks before they have all revived. OPCA advises homeowners who find lady beetles in their homes not to use a vacuum cleaner with a beater bar to remove live and dead insects. This will crush their bodies, leaving a wet residue on the bar. Clean infested areas using suction alone.

There has been a great deal of discussion as to what draws lady beetles to one home and not another. Some claim that the southern exposure of light-colored homes is most attractive; others say they are attracted to certain odors in homes. Either way a homeowner may be left with lots of beetles. Once they are there treatment options are seriously reduced. The first line of defense is keeping the beetles out.

Exterior treatments can have a beneficial effect in reducing the numbers. Eliminating routes of entry is also important. Caulking cracks, crevices and utility accesses to the home. Fixing windows along with barrier strips can also make a difference. Fortunately these potential pests are both harmless and cyclical, but if a problem develops homeowners may want to consult a pest control professional.

The safest and most effective solution to a serious pest problem is the services of an experienced, licensed pest management professional. To locate a qualified pest control operator in your area contact the Ohio Pest Control Association at 937-222-1024, visit the OPCA web site at www.ohiopca.com, or send e-mail to info@ohiopca.com

The Ohio Pest Control Association is the only trade association dedicated solely to the pest control industry in the state of Ohio. With approximately 200 member companies in communities throughout the state, OPCA is The Voice of the Pest Control Industry in Ohio.