

CLOVER MITES

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Clover mites are accidental invaders that can be a nuisance during the early spring and occasionally in the fall. They are very small, reddish-brown creatures that appear only as moving dark spots to the naked eye. Sheer numbers, plus the resulting red-brown stain left behind if they are crushed, make them unwelcome visitors. The red stains are not blood, they are the mite's body pigments. Clover mites are not blood feeders and will not harm people or pets, nor will they infest household products. Once inside a home or building they will soon die.

As the name implies, clover mites feed on clover and grasses. They can be especially abundant in the heavy, succulent growth of well-fertilized lawns. Clover mites usually enter a home around windows or doors so they are usually seen crawling along sills or thresholds. Clover mites can crawl up outside walls and may enter the buildings at upper levels.

Clover mites are a temporary nuisance; they appear suddenly and then are gone. A soapy rag or wet sponge can be used to clean mites off of surfaces. Wipe carefully to avoid crushing the mites and causing stains. The crevice tool of a vacuum cleaner may also be used to pick up mites. Rely on non-chemical control indoors. Do not apply insecticides to kitchen counters or other interior surfaces.

There is an increased potential for invading structures when grass extends up to the foundation. A plant bed or open area will provide a barrier that will stop many mites and provide a long term solution to persistent problems. Avoid overfertilizing lawns. This creates situations that are ideal for mites to increase to tremendous numbers.

Mites seen on the outside of buildings can be killed with a direct spray of an insecticidal soap or regular liquid dish-washing soap at the rate of 2 tablespoons per gallon of water. This treatment will not provide any residual control.

A spray of Dursban (chlorpyrifos), Kelthane (dicofol) along the outside walls and extending about 10 feet out from the foundation may provide some relief. However,

the treatment will break down over time. There is no way to anticipate movement of the mites in the spring or fall, so it is a guess as to when to apply preventive treatments.