

Meet Spots: Lincoln's Bed Bug-Sniffing Dog

Barb Ogg
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Spots is the perfect employee. He's low to the ground and doesn't mind being on all fours. He is doggedly tenacious. He never whines about working conditions. And best of all, he works for kibble. Spots is a bed bug-sniffing dog.

Well-trained bed bug-sniffing dogs are extraordinarily accurate and much more accurate than humans at finding bed bugs. Entomology researchers at the University of Florida reported well-trained dogs can detect bed bugs with 96 percent accuracy. Spots was trained in Kansas at Iron Heart High Performance Working Dogs.

One of the biggest difficulties in controlling bed bugs is finding infestations when they are small and easier to control. Because bed bugs feed at night and hide during the daytime, people often do not know they have an infestation. They may attribute a few bites to other causes. Most of the time, people do not see live bugs until the infestation is well established. When that happens, bed bugs are harder to control.

Finding a small infestation can be tough. Inspecting requires



Spots, a rat terrier, sticks his nose between the mattress and box springs to smell the live bed bug placed there by his owner. When he detects bed bugs, he has been trained to sit, point and bark.

dismantling a bed, removing the sheets, flipping over the mattress and examining the inside of the box springs. It is even more difficult to find bed bugs in a sofa or easy chair.

An easier and more accurate inspection can be executed with a dog — one specifically trained to detect bed bugs. These special dogs are trained alongside dogs that sniff out narcotics, explosives, or cadavers.

James and Amy Pelowski are Spots' owners. As good as Spots is, the dog handler is just as important. James went through extensive training with Spots and is a certified dog handler.

Every day, James puts Spots through a series of bed bug detecting exercises to maintain his training. He gets fed only when he finds live bed bugs. He is truly a working dog.

Spots has been trained to only detect live bed bugs and bed bug eggs. This is important because he won't key on dead bugs killed by previous treatments.

If a person knows he has bed bugs, it doesn't make sense to hire Spots. But it might make sense to hire a dog:

- if it is important to know if other bedrooms are infested or whether the sofa needs to be treated or discarded.



James Pelowski, Spots' owner, demonstrated to bed bug workshop attendees the exercises he puts Spots through each day. One vial has a live bed bug; the others are empty. Spots is fed if he detects the correct vial.

- if the neighboring apartment has bed bugs and the landlord wants to know if bed bugs have moved into neighboring units.
- if a person wants to make sure the bed bug infestation has been eradicated. (James says you must wait 30 days after a chemical treatment for Spots to accurately find bed bugs.)
- when bed bugs are suspected in locations where bed bugs might be scattered, like office buildings, hospitals, schools, and movie theaters. Earlier this year, a movie theater company in New York City received complaints about bed bugs in

their theaters. They hired a dog who found bed bugs in only two of the 4,700 seats, saving treatment costs and preventing unnecessary insecticide exposure.

- to inspect vacant apartments before new tenants move in. It would also make sense to use a dog to inspect hotel and motel rooms on a regular basis.

Spots is the first bed bug-sniffing dog in Nebraska. We are fortunate he lives in Lincoln. To find out how much James and Spots charge for an inspection, call (402) 613-0889 or go to www.k9bedbugdetect.com.

You Can Still Enjoy Feeding Birds Even on a Budget

Soni Cochran
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If finances are tight, you can still find ways to enjoy watching birds and bird feeding without busting your budget. Try these tips:

1. Learn about birds and wildlife found in our area. By learning about birds and wildlife found in our area, you'll make the best choices when it comes to selecting bird seed, feeders and plants to add to your landscape.

Bird and wildlife field guides are not overly expensive and make great gifts. Be sure to purchase guides especially written for birds and animals found in your region. Field guides can be checked out from the library. Bookstores also carry field guides. And if you are lucky, you might find one at a garage sale or thrift store.

For an inexpensive, fun

family outing, consider a trip to one of these sites to learn more about feeding birds and wildlife found locally:

- Pioneers Nature Center in Lincoln; <http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/parks/naturecenter>.
- Spring Creek Prairie, south of Denton, <http://springcreek-prairie.audubon.org>.

2. Shop around for bird seed. Check sales flyers from pet stores, farm supply stores, nurseries, specialty wild bird feeding stores, discount stores, and more. Stock up when prices are lower. You can also check on-line for stores with competitive prices, but remember to figure in shipping and handling costs. If you only feed birds during fall/winter, make sure you use up the seed so you don't have to store it over the summer.

3. Offer better seed. Avoid mixes of seed containing fillers like milo. These bags of seed may seem less expensive,

but you'll quickly find out birds waste most of the seed. They kick the filler seed right onto the ground where it spoils. If you use Niger seed and hulled sunflower chips, you'll get much less waste and have fewer seed hulls to clean up. Black-oil sunflower seeds and safflower are also a good combination for many birds in our area.

4. Buy bird seed in bulk. Larger bags or buckets of bird seed are usually sold at a better price-per-pound of seed. And by buying in larger quantities, you make fewer trips to the store.

If you are buying in bulk, store your bird seed in rodent-proof containers. Purchase or use a clean, metal garbage can with a tight-fitting lid. Keep the seed bin in an unheated garage or outside shed to help discourage pantry pests from infesting the seed. These pests *see BIRDS on page 11*



Niger seed

Hulled sunflower chips

Black-oil sunflower seeds

Safflower seed

Cluster Flies and Face Flies Indoors

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Cluster flies and face flies overwinter as adults. In the late summer, these flies begin to crawl into small cracks and crevices of structures. These small openings are often found around window frames, door frames, and under siding or eaves. The flies hibernate in the walls or attics to survive until springtime.

These flies appear during warm periods in the winter or when sun heats up exterior walls where the flies are hibernating.

Once these flies crawl into cracks and crevices, they cannot be prevented from entering the structure. Sealing cracks and crevices is the best and most permanent solution to this insect problem. This effort will also help keep out Asian lady bird beetles and boxelder bugs.

These flies buzz around windows because they are attracted to outdoor light. They can become a problem in virtually any structure, but older homes that have ill-fitting windows and siding are especially at risk.

Catch these flies with fly tape or other fly traps in front of

uncurtained windows. In attics or other unoccupied portions of the house, a fogger may be helpful.

Cluster flies — These flies are larger than a house fly and recognizable because they are very slow moving and sluggish.



(L-R) Adult cluster fly and face fly shown approximately twice size.

They are dark gray and have irregular lighter patches on the abdomen. The wings overlap at the tips when sitting on a surface.

Cluster flies are earthworm parasites. Throughout the spring and summer, they lay eggs singly in cracks in the soil. After an egg hatches, the emerging maggot penetrates the body of an earthworm. There are several generations of cluster flies each summer.

Face flies — The face fly is nearly identical to the house fly. Homes with face fly infestations in the winter are often in rural areas near livestock pastures, because this fly breeds in animal manure.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

University of Nebraska—Lincoln Extension in Lancaster County article "Flies in the Home" is available online at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/resources/Flies015.shtml>