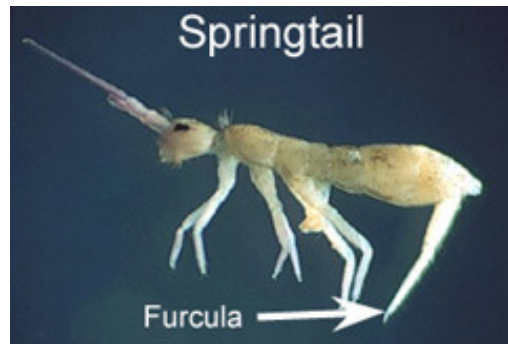


SPRINGTAILS



Springtails sometimes cause alarm to homeowners when seen outdoors in enormous numbers, appearing as "piles of soot" in driveways, backyards, on mud puddle surfaces, etc. Occasionally, they enter the home where dampness occurs such as in basements, cellars, bathrooms, and kitchens, especially near drains, leaking water pipes, sinks, and in the soil of over-watered house plants. They usually appear in the spring and early summer but can be found all year round. Some are known as "snow fleas," appearing on the top of snow during late winter and early spring. These very small, leaping insects do not bite humans, spread disease, nor damage household furnishings. They are usually a nuisance by their presence.

IDENTIFICATION:

Springtails are minute, wingless insects about 1/16 to 1/8 inch (1 to 2 mm) long. Colors vary from white, gray, yellow, orange, metallic green, lavender to red with some being patterned or mottled. They get their name from the ability to catapult themselves (leap) through the air three to four inches by means of a tail-like mechanism (*furcula*) tucked under the abdomen. When disturbed, this appendage functions as a spring, propelling them into the air away from the danger source. Young resemble adults except for size and color. Eggs are spherical.

LIFE CYCLE & HABITS:

Springtails occur in nearly every climatic condition throughout the world, such as in high mountain regions,



pools, streams, snow-covered fields, forest floors, etc. They live in the soil, in leaf mold, under bark, in decaying logs, on the surface of freshwater pools, in organic mulches, in termite nests, in snow, in greenhouses, in mushroom cellars, etc. Populations are often high, up to 100,000 per cubic meter of surface soil, or many millions per acre. Most feed on algae, fungi, and decaying vegetable matter, and they are abundant only in damp, moist or very humid locations. Others feed on plant roots or nibble on young plant leaves and germinating seeds in hotbeds. Actually, they are beneficial by reducing decayed vegetation to soil (they are good recyclers). Some can reproduce at temperatures as low as 40F. They move by crawling or jumping, followed by periods of rest. Sometimes they may become a pest by their presence when very abundant, and by entering homes through doorways, screens, or other openings. Buildings with constant high humidity may be overrun with springtails.

PREVENTION:

Springtails are commonly found where there are sources of moisture. Any means to provide a drying effect in the home is very effective, such as the use of a fan or dehumidifier, or repairing plumbing leaks and dripping pipes. Avoid over-watering potted house plants and allow the soil to dry between watering, if possible. Outside the home, remove excessive mulch, moist leaves, prune shrubbery and ground cover, and eliminate low, moist areas around the house foundation to permit proper air circulation. Remove wet, moldy wood or other moldy items. Since springtails are attracted to light and may pass under lighted doorways at night, use good light discipline. Sodium vapor (yellow bug lights) are always a good to use around doors and windows as this will minimize insect pressure around these entry points.

TREATMENT:

Typically an interior treatment is not required since control measures around the exterior perimeter of the structure usually prove successful. Residual insecticide applications are focused on mulch and other organic material areas. If a treatment is required indoors it is limited to residual insecticides applied to cracks & crevices as well as window, wall, and ceiling/floor voids.

CREDITS:

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