

Business

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Company set to freeze out bed bugs



Kevin Hill/NOW

Brett Johnston demonstrates a bed-bug eradication technique that's new to Canada: Cryonite. It freezes the bugs without the use of pesticides.

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They feed almost exclusively at night, make their best effort to hide during the day and prey on people when they're least suspecting it. Their primary food source? Human blood.

Taking all that into account, it's fair to say bed bugs share a lot in common with your everyday vampire, but one Coquitlam company is at the forefront of new technology to eradicate the household pests. Based on North Bend Street, Canadian Pest Control Ltd. is set to roll out a natural combatant in the war on bed bugs, called Cryonite.

"Cryonite is a freezing process. It turns CO2 in gas canister, the same as you have in the back of restaurant to turn pop into fizzy pop, into super cold snow, which is blown out under pressure," said

Brett Johnston, general manager of Canadian Pest Control. "The super cold particles of snow hit the bug, shock the bug, and they cannot adapt to the massive drop in temperature — and they die from shock."

Though used in Europe and the U.S. for decades, Cryonite was only recently given the regulatory green light by the federal government. Johnston's company will be the first in Metro Vancouver to roll out the new technology, and he expects to be offering it to customers this month.

Other methods used to kill bed bugs have traditionally involved pesticides, heat treatments, steamers and vacuums. Cryonite, however, is a more efficient way to kill the bugs, and the process can be completed quickly without masks, respirators or the use of any pesticides. In fact, those having their properties treated with Cryonite can remain in their homes while the process takes place.

"The great thing about Cryonite is that it's

immediate. With the vast majority of pesticides, it takes several minutes, if not hours," Johnston said. "The real kicker with Cryonite is that it kills eggs. Pesticides don't kill eggs; eggs are quite well protected from their environment, but the super cooling is something that penetrates the egg and kills the egg."

Bed bugs have enjoyed a worldwide resurgence since the late 1990s and early 2000s and a number of theories exist as to why that's happened. In the Metro Vancouver context, Johnston said the bug's proliferation is likely due to the multitude of cultures that use Vancouver as their starting point before scattering across the region and province.

And given that bed bugs are human parasites, they have conditioned themselves to adapt to any situation. The bugs are first attracted to humans through the emission of body heat and plumes of CO2 that come off the body, and because the bugs inject an

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Bed bugs 'really prefer humans'

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anesthetic when they bite, most people will never know they've been bitten or have an infestation, until it's too late.

Though they prefer to feed at night, if a person is a shift worker and sleeps during the day, the bugs will feed on

them during daylight hours. That said, the bug's preferred feeding hours are between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m., Johnston said, the hours when people are most likely to be in their deepest stages of sleep.

A full-grown bed bug is about the size of an apple seed and is reddish-brown in

colour.

"Their food source is strictly blood," Johnston said.

"They have a piercing, sucking mouth like a mosquito, but they don't have a chewing mouth part. They cannot feed on anything else: just blood. And they really prefer humans."

Banish bed bugs:

In the world of bed bugs, cleanliness is next to godliness.

Reducing clutter and keeping your home clean are two of the best ways to keep bed bugs out of your life.

"Bed bugs love clutter;

clutter really is the key. It doesn't matter if you're super loaded and have got a house in West Vancouver or if you're down and out and you've got a unit in a private hostel in the Downtown Eastside — if your unit is

full of clutter, the bed bugs have tons of places to hide," said Brett Johnston, general manager of Canadian Pest Control.

Awareness is also paramount. Check underneath mattresses, bed boards and box springs for dried blood spots or dark, pepper-like materials, which are often the bed bug's entrails.

"You need to be aware that bed bugs are an issue. Bed bugs can be an issue when someone comes to stay with you. People don't just bring

them home themselves; someone can bring them home for you," he said, adding that those living in apartments and townhomes are more susceptible to infestations.

Johnston also suggests that your bed and bed sheets

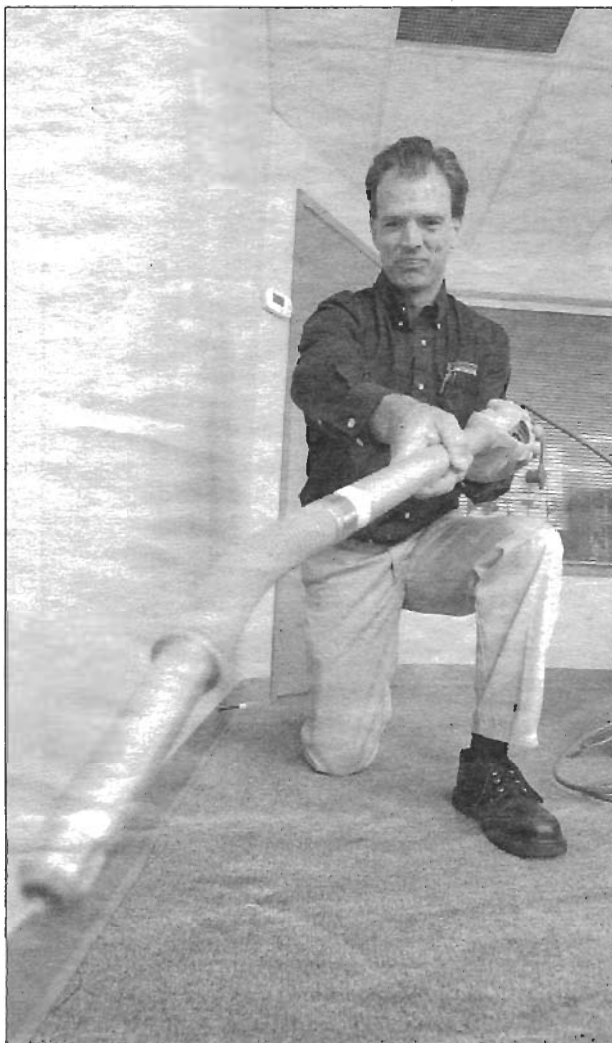
not touch the floor. He added that encasements can be purchased for both mattresses and box springs — the two most preferred homes for bed bugs — that prevent the insects from

getting into those spots.

If you've already noticed the bugs in your bed or in your clothes, running them through the dryer should kill them off.

“Bed bugs can be an issue when someone comes to stay with you.”

Brett Johnston
Canadian Pest Control



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Canadian Pest Control's freezing process can be done with residents still in the home.

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