

Bed bugs outsmart pesticides

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As EPA hosted its second annual [National Bed Bug Summit](#) in Washington, D.C. this week, evidence continues to mount that bed bugs are increasingly immune to the pesticides being used to control them.

Bed bugs are providing a textbook example of how pests become resistant to pesticides. [According to researchers](#) at Ohio State University, when pesticides are applied to bed bug colonies, inevitably a small population survives and develops resistance to the chemical used. As these survivors reproduce, they pass on that resistance to their offspring, creating new generations of pesticide-resistant bed bugs.

The more pesticides the bugs are exposed to, the more resistant genes are developed. As Sara Kantarovich, technical director and corporate trainer at Smithereen Pest Management Services observed,

They've done tests where we use common pesticides. One out of three bed bugs dies when you spray it directly. Those are not good odds.

Because of this natural phenomenon, the implementation of non-chemical solutions to bed bugs is becoming increasingly important — and urgent.

Unfortunately, it appears such reports are falling on deaf ears among politicians in New York City, where bed bugs have persistently made headlines. In a letter to EPA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the [New York City Council wrote](#), "Given the difficulty of exterminating bed bugs, we are calling upon the EPA to conduct further research and development of effective pesticides."

Instead of calling for more pesticides, New York city officials should be implementing the strategies outlined by its very own [New York State IPM program](#), including tips for thorough inspection and mechanical removal (vacuuming) and exclusion (sealing crevices, etc). On the other side of the country, [Californians for Pesticide Reform](#) recently hosted a statewide training for pesticide companies and landlords featuring nonchemical approaches to bed bug control, including [IPM and non-chemical solutions](#) such as diatomaceous earth and [heat treatments](#).

We hope EPA uses this year's bed bug summit as an opportunity to address the issue of pesticide

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resistance, and devotes more resources to developing and promoting common-sense alternatives to chemical intensive treatments.

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