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Emergency Flood Information

PEST CONTROL AFTER THE FLOOD



*Institute of Agriculture
and Natural Resources*

By Rollin D. Schnieder, Extension Safety Specialist,
in cooperation with William Rapp, Nebraska
State Department of Health

After a flood, infestations of insects, rodents, snakes and other pests may cause numerous health problems for humans and livestock. Use the following preventive measures and apply pesticides if necessary. Do not overreact to emergency conditions, however. Use pesticides only in the areas and amounts specified on the label. Keep them out of the reach of children, pets and livestock.

INSECTS: Insects multiply rapidly as post-flood conditions provide many favorable breeding sites. Mosquito, fly and other insect outbreaks can reach alarming rates quickly.

Avoid potential health problems by eliminating breeding spots. Cesspools, cisterns, trash containers and rain barrels should be covered. Drain standing puddles, marshes and containers filled with water. Use insecticides to treat standing water and sanitation pits. Dispose of garbage and animal carcasses as recommended. If you use manure as fertilizer, spread it thinly so it dries quickly.

Repair or replace damaged screens, windows, doors, and vents that allow insects to enter your home and farm buildings. Use household sprays indoors and apply an insecticide to window screens. In heavily infected areas, use commercial outdoor sprays, and wear protective clothing and insect repellent.

Your State Health Department or County Cooperative Extension Office can recommend insecticides and provide directions for use.

RODENTS: Rats and other rodents may move into homes and outbuildings to escape flood water. Search likely harboring places in your home and farm buildings. Carry a flashlight and approach closets, basements, storage areas, stairwells, bins and shelves cautiously.

Do not endanger yourself—guard against rat bites. If you are bitten by a rodent, try to capture or kill it, and take it immediately to a health authority to check for rabies. You may need medical treatment.

Clean up piles of garbage and debris both indoors and outdoors, and cover garbage cans tightly. Store foods in glass or metal containers in cupboards. Set traps and poisons in strategic locations, and maintain them even after you have stopped an infestation. Dispose of dead rodents as you would livestock carcasses.

SNAKES AND OTHER ANIMALS: Snakes, turtles, lizards, and other animals may enter homes and farm buildings to escape the flood. To prevent infestations of these animals, block all possible openings into buildings, including cracks beneath doors, drains to basements, breaks in foundations, and vents. Remove debris piles from your homesite and store materials off the ground.

Be especially alert for poisonous snakes. Poisonous snakes can strike for a distance of one-third their length. Their bite shows two fang marks on the skin and the bitten area becomes very painful. Although most snakes are harmless, the bite of a poisonous snake can cause sickness and death.

If you are bitten, capture or kill the snake, using a shovel, hoe or other long-handled tool. If the snake is poisonous, obtain prompt medical help. Harmless snakes should be trapped and removed from your property. Wash the bite of a non-poisonous snake and apply an antiseptic.

Snapping turtles and some other animals can also inflict painful bites. Many animals pose no danger, however. As flood waters recede, animals will normally migrate back to their own habitats.

Extension work in "Agriculture, Home Economics and subjects relating thereto," The Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Cooperating with the Counties and the U.S. Department of Agriculture
Leo E. Lucas, Director

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