



## RAT MITES and BIRD MITES

Mites are tiny eight-legged insect-like animals. Most species are barely visible to the naked eye. A majority of them live on plants and plant juices, but many are blood feeders. The rat and bird mites are blood feeders and may use humans as hosts. They are not much bigger than a speck of dirt, but still can be seen, particularly if in motion. These mites live in separate environments, so they will be discussed individually below.

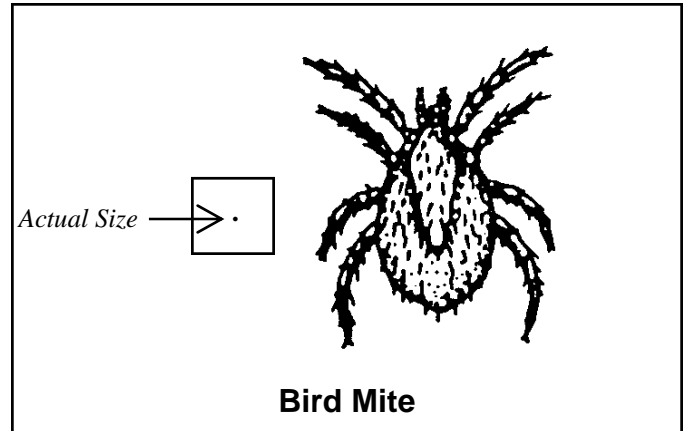
If you or a member of your family suspects that they are being bitten by these tiny arthropods, read the following and decide on which one (or *if* either one) is bothering you, then follow the instructions suggested in this bulletin.

### THE RAT MITE

The Tropical Rat Mite (*Ornithonyssus bacoti*) is distributed worldwide, as are its rat hosts. As indicated by the name, the rat mite feeds on the blood of rats, living on the rat's body, and also in its nest. Quite often the rat makes its home in an attic or basement where it is warm and safe. Usually this is in the wintertime when it is not too hot in an attic. If the rat is killed or leaves its nest for any period of time, the rat mites migrate. Quite often they will get into the living area of a house and then may feed on the blood of the occupants. During cold weather, in most cases, the rat mites will try to stay where it is warm such as near a heater or heater vent. The rat mite usually bites the human host on the warmer parts of the body or around where the clothing is tight, such as around the waist.

### CONTROL OF THE RAT MITE

The key to rat mite control is the elimination of the host rats. You must exterminate the rats before control of the mites is possible. Control of the rat mite is not difficult if one keeps in mind its habits. Washable surfaces can be rinsed down with water



and some detergent. Other areas may have to be vacuumed to pick up the little creatures. After a vacuum has been used, the bag should be removed (or emptied), sealed inside of a plastic bag, and disposed of in the rubbish. Occasionally, it is necessary to spray a rat's nesting area in order to kill the mites. All necessary safety precautions should be taken if an insecticide is used in a dead air space such as an attic. (*See recommendations under Control of the Bird Mite on back.*)

### THE BIRD MITE

Bird mites are very similar to the rat mites in appearance, but very unlike them in habits. These little mites, as the name implies, live on birds and in their nests. There is no implication of the need for warmth by the bird mite as there is for the rat mite. For example, they may bite a human on any exposed portion of the body and avoid the warmer parts. Bird mites may migrate from a nest into a dwelling. It must be remembered that these little mites do not fly; therefore, the nest would have to be located either on a building or on a branch, which touches the outer wall. They can then enter a home and may feed on the humans they encounter. In most instances, bird mite problems develop in the winter and spring when birds build their nests and raise their young.

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## CONTROL OF THE BIRD MITE

Search for the nest and remove or destroy it when possible. **WARNING: It is illegal to disturb bird nests when eggs or young birds are present within the nest.** If necessary, spray the area where the nest was located with a household insecticide. For the interior of the house, cleanse washable surfaces and use the vacuum as suggested for the control of rat mites.

Miticides and insecticides for the control of mites may be obtained from a nursery, garden supply, hardware store, market, etc. Do not purchase a pesticide unless the word "mites" is listed on the label. The pesticide must also be recommended for use in the specific situation for which you intend to use it (i.e. indoors, outdoors, on buildings, or plants). Follow all safety precautions and label instructions.

## CAUTION

Handle pesticides with care. Read all precautionary labeling and follow mixing directions exactly. Apply only in amounts specified. Do not use near open flame or exposed foods. Clean food preparation areas after use of pesticides. Store in original labeled containers in a locked cabinet or shed, out of reach of children, irresponsible persons, and pets. Dispose of container when empty so that they pose no hazard to humans and animals. See label for disposal instructions. **Never burn pesticide containers.**

*No endorsement of trade names is intended nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned. If additional help is needed, contact with a licensed pest control operator is suggested.*

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