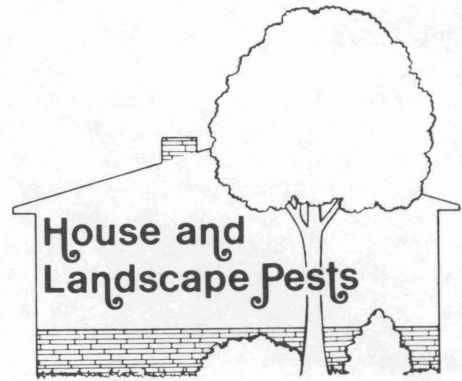


CLOVER MITES

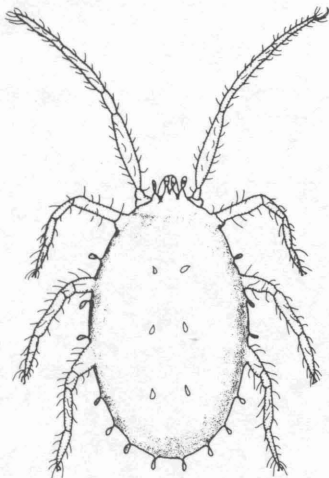
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Clover mites are found throughout the world on trees, shrubs, flowers, grasses and agricultural crops. They are not insects but are more closely related to chiggers, ticks and spiders. They occur normally outdoors, but can invade the home at certain times of the year in such numbers as to become an important nuisance.

Identification

Clover mites are tiny, eight-legged, reddish or brown creatures, smaller than a pinhead. The best distinguishing feature is the pair of front legs that are longer than the body and about twice the length of the 3 pairs of other legs.



Adult Clover Mite

Biology and Habits

Clover mites breed and feed in grasses, clovers, trees, shrubs and other plants around buildings and on lawns. Heavy feeding results in leaves having a silvered appearance. Eggs are laid on the vegetation throughout summer and fall and those laid in the fall hatch the following spring. The young mites may sometimes be seen in such numbers on the bark of trees, rocks and cracks and crevices of foundation walls as to give the appearance of brick dust. After hatching, the mites pass through four stages of development — larvae, two nymphal stages and adult. Each of these stages lasts 2 to 6 days. One month is ordinarily required to complete a generation outdoors. Two or more generations are produced each year. All developmental stages of clover mites may be present during the winter.

Clover mites are not only considered a pest because they feed on turfgrass and ornamentals, but they also invade homes to overrun floors, walkways, furniture, windowpanes, and get into beds and clothing. They do not bite people, transmit diseases or feed on household furnishings or pantry supplies. They are simply a nuisance. These mites can invade a home in such numbers as to give infested surfaces a reddish appearance. When crushed, they leave a reddish stain that is especially noticeable on white surfaces. Household invasion by the mite may occur when (1) their host plants have been removed (adjacent fields cut or plants dried up by dry weather), or (2) approaching cold weather drives them indoors to seek protection. Infestations are usually most severe at new home sites where grass and weeds are allowed to grow adjacent to the building. Older lawns that are heavily fertilized are also favored by this mite. In these sites, if populations of natural enemies are

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allowed to become established, the mites become less of a problem. In late fall, thousands of mites may gather on vegetation around homes and on foundation walls. When the weather turns cold, they seek protection in cracks, behind shingles or siding. While in hiding, they are inactive. In the spring, they become active again and crawl from their hiding place in search of food. In doing so, they often find their way inside the home.

Control

Outdoors

One method of suppression is to maintain a grass-free strip, 18 to 24 inches wide, around the foundation. This may not eliminate the problem entirely, but when combined with pesticide applications, gives satisfactory results. A second method is to apply pesticides to the lower exterior walls, the foundation and a 10 to 20 feet wide strip of adjacent lawn. If the entire lawn is infested, it will require treating. An additional application 7 to 10 days after the first may be needed if the premise is heavily infested.

Pesticide products containing chlorobenzilate (Acaraben®), chlorpyrifos (Dursban®), diazinon, dicofol (Kelthane®) and malathion may be used outdoors for clover mite control. Powdered sulfur applied to window sills and grass and vegetation near the house, or lubricating oil applied around the base of the foundation near the ground are old remedies, and may be less effective.

Indoors

Controlling clover mites indoors is difficult. The best safeguard is to keep them out. Seal cracks around doors, windows and other places where mites are likely to enter. If they become numerous indoors, use a vacuum cleaner to pick up live mites. Always seal the sweeper bag tightly and dispose of it. Make spot applications to base boards, around windows and doors and between windows and screens with pesticide products containing propoxur (Baygon®), diazinon, chlorpyrifos (Dursban®), malathion or synergized pyrethrins. Remember, treatments within the home give only temporary relief if no control measures are practiced outside.

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