



Ask Gail

by William D. Frye, Ph.D., CHE

New detection system can eliminate false claims against hotels of bed bug infestation

Another great article from *The Rooms Chronicle*®, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! ***Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.*** College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com

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Dear Gail:

Our resort is located in a warm tropical environment and recently we have had several guests complain that they have been the victim of bed bugs inside our guestrooms. We have taken each claim seriously and have immediately investigated the guestroom in question. However, we have not found any evidence of bed bugs, nor have any guests provided us specimens of bed bugs. But they show us marks on their body that appear as though they could be bed bug bites. How should we handle these claims? With all the recent news coverage about bed bugs, are guests just overreacting?

Damian G.
Honolulu, HI

Dear Damian,

Indeed, you are correct. Claims of bed bug bites are increasing each year. This is like because bed bugs are proliferating rapidly in the United States. Eradicated in the U.S. by the 1950's because of DDT and other very powerful pest control chemicals that have since been banned, American hotels are seeing the resurgence of bed bugs that are brought in by travelers who have visited other countries where they have survived. Bed bugs have been found in hotels in all 50 states.

Unfortunately, it is sometimes difficult to ascertain whether the bug bites on human skin are the result of bed bugs, mosquitoes, or some other insect, especially in warm weather tropical climates such as yours. Unless the bed bugs are actually found on the guest's skin, in their luggage, on their clothes, or inside their guestroom, determining whether the resort is liable can be very tricky. And as you suggest, all the publicity and news coverage about bed bugs have caused many guests to become extremely vigilant and perhaps oversensitive to the issue.

To illustrate this point of oversensitivity, I attended a bed bug panel discussion recently at the International Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Show in New York City. The session lasted 90

minutes and was attended by over 150 hoteliers. Everyone kept scratching and itching during the presentation after the first picture of a bed bug was shown. Yet, there were no bed bugs present in the exhibition hall!

So, how is a hotel supposed to defend itself against claims of bed bug bites from overly sensitive hotel guests? This can be difficult since the resort does not want to summarily dismiss any guests' claims and appear as uncaring or disingenuous, yet the resort does not want to be liable for claims that are not true or which it held no legal responsibility for.

The good news for hoteliers is that a new bed bug detection product has recently been developed that will enable hoteliers to check for recent activities of bed bugs in guestrooms on and near beds. The Night Stick Bed Bug Detection device has just been introduced to the market in the past few months and is Patent Pending. Essentially, the Night Stick is an economical bed bug interceptor that can show whether bed bugs have been present on guest beds.

Made of PVC plastic, this five foot long detection system is easily and discretely installed between the box spring and mattress or inside the bed rails and the box spring, both on the side and head of the bed. Also included are corner traps that are placed along the outside corners of the box springs. Both items utilize a new attractant technology that bed bugs associate with humans, yet it contains no substances toxic to humans or insects. Hence, it is exempt from EPA registration. The Night Stick system has been developed in such a unique configuration so as to attract bed bugs in three ways: built-in safe harborage, fecal detection, and glue board monitoring. If bed bugs exist, they will either





willingly lodge themselves into the unique crevices and contours of the Night Stick, become adhered within the adhesive circular holes that run the length of each Night Stick, or fecal evidence of the bed bugs will soil the sides of the detection device. Regardless, the Night Stick can easily be checked in 15 seconds or less by room attendants every day when they make up the bed.

The early detection device enables hotels to discover bed bugs prior to full blown infestation, helps prevent expensive disruptions of business operations, and allows for quick eradication steps to be taken. It can capture and kill a bed bug before it can establish itself. Equally important, it reduces false accusations from guests about the

presence of bed bugs. This proactively eliminates lost income and potential lawsuits by furnishing immediate proof that the guestroom is bed bug free. Ultimately, the Night Stick promotes a positive and proactive image for the hotel during a period of heightened sensitivity for hotel guests.

To learn more about this new bed bug detection device, please visit the website at www.bedbugnightstick.com. ✧

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