



Bedbugs: A reemerging issue for modern campuses

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A freshman/resident at ABAC woke up one morning to see herself in the mirror covered with small red rashes. It was only a week past move-in and she was new to South Georgia.

She thought to herself, “Maybe it was just allergies or some bug I wasn’t used to.” A couple weeks pass and the rashes persisted. One day, she discovered three little bugs.

She got on her computer and searched online. They look like bedbugs, just what she feared. She checks the curtains. They were infested. She flipped the mattress. Swarms of bed bugs scurried like roaches off the baseboards.

This is becoming a common sight for hotels and living spaces across America, and it’s only getting worse. Bed bugs were nearly eradicated in the ‘40s but have been on the rise across the world since the ‘90s.

Dr. Christopher Kinsey, Head of Housing and Resident Life at ABAC, can attest to this fact. “Ten years ago or so, we had no cases of bed bugs but as international travel has become more prevalent we have started seeing more cases. Less than five isolated cases have been reported [each school year] since then.”

This year, there have been more cases of bed bugs than ever before according to Mr. Teddy Spikes, the Operations Manager and Corvias representative at housing. He claims to have found bed bugs as large as his thumbnail.

Spikes assures students that the rooms were cleared of bed bugs before they moved in this fall. “I didn’t carry the bugs but somebody brought them. Bugs love suitcases and duffle bags,” he said. You see, bed bugs don’t spread from room to room without being carried there. They generally don’t spread via people but rather via suitcases and furniture.

As time passes, new issues emerge for growing colleges like ABAC. Faculty and staff must do whatever they can to adapt and solve these issues. Dr. Kinsey presents the case that housing handles these issues swiftly while also keeping students in mind during the eradication process.

The process by which Housing handles this situation starts when an emergency work order is submitted. When the order is received, usually within the hour, a housing official as well as a CA will go and inspect the room.

Normally Spikes or Dr. Kinsey will inspect the room personally. If bed bugs are found then Astro Pest Control is contacted and they come to inspect and treat the room as soon as possible. Students lose access to their room for a minimum of four hours.

Often, Astro



A bed bug nymph on human arm.
Photo Credit: Piotr Naskrecki via Harvard University.

can’t come treat until the following day so students must be put up in another empty room or stay off campus if they so choose. If bed bugs are found students are given a document outlining the process on housing’s end and also what the student is required to do.

Prior to treatment students must wash all clothing and bedding as well as dry them in dryers that reach a specific temperature to kill bed bugs. Spikes advises students that the dorm’s dryer’s don’t usually reach the temperature required to kill and suggests Tift Coin Laundry. If anything requires dry-cleaning, students should inform the cleaner of the risk.

Everything must be packed in bags. Foods, medication and other perishable items must be packed in bags, too. Suitcases must be left to be treated.

If students cannot leave campus they are given a place to stay on campus but are responsible if they spread bedbugs. This plan allows for bedbugs to be dealt with swiftly and with little disruption to the lives of students.

However, two students say they had a very different experience than what housing’s protocol established. These two girls are the ones who found that disgusting scene under their beds and all over the bed bugs.

The students called housing

after discovering the infestation and were told to put in a work order by whomever was on the opposite end of the line. The students claim that it took nearly five days before someone had come and checked their rooms.

This may have been the case but the records from housing show that an emergency work order was placed on Sept. 8 at 2:23 p.m. and the room was inspected at 2:50 p.m. and that Astro Exterminators was called at around 8 a.m. the following day.

This record does not conclude that students weren’t handled swiftly. The students may have submitted a regular work order after having called housing, which created the delay and miscommunication. However, if the students’ just called housing, they should have responded as soon as possible regardless of work order.

Dr. Kinsey claims that calling or even stopping by housing is a much slower process than submitting a emergency work order.

When the students were finally approached and instructed on what to do they began packing everything away. After a dozen trash bags full of washables were packed they had to take their belongings to be cleaned.

Spikes advised them to use the laundromat in town for a better clean. The students did not like this idea. They weren’t able to get to the laundromat till late in the evening and felt endangered at this place but had no choice but to stay.

They had to pay for all for their laundry, as well. The students claimed that they were told, “You brought them so it is your responsibility.”

However, the students homes were bed bug free and they had not stayed in any hotels recently. In cases like these, it’s impossible to tell “whodunit” and Dr.

Kinsey freely acknowledged that. Spikes, however, is adamant that it couldn’t have been housing who brought them in.

“The bugs weren’t here before you moved in. I’m 100 percent sure that they weren’t there before. I’m not saying that they brought them in but someone, maybe a friend or something, had to have brought them in,” Spikes said.

The students also claimed that they were not given a place to stay, at first. Another staff member on campus had to approach housing to convince them to allow them to stay but the students were held responsible for any possible contamination.

These students felt as though housing was inconsiderate and rude. They also felt like they were ill-prepared to handle these situations.

Spikes has been at ABAC for over five years. He was here when Sodexo took over as well as Corvais. “Corvias is the best company I’ve worked for. The people are good and they care about their residents.”

If you wander the halls of the Place buildings this year, you may see a piece of paper that reads “DO NOT RE-ENTER.” There have been more cases of bed bugs this semester than any other semester.

Housing plans to handle these issues on a case by case basis until they either stop or a source is revealed. Be careful when bringing bags and furniture to others rooms. If you do, leave them on tile floor until you are sure that there’s no bugs.

Make sure to check underneath your mattress and along the curtains for lints (bedbug eggs) or feces. Prevention is the best way to avoid bed bugs. Practice these tips if you ever go to a hotel room or any rent-a-bed.

