

Bedbugs invade beds in the Bay Area

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The best and most environmentally friendly ways to get rid of bedbugs.

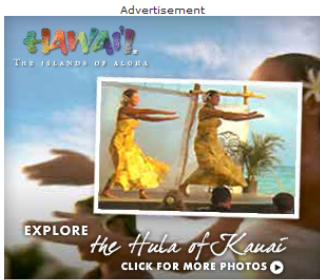
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BERKELEY, CA (KGO) -- There's an invasion hitting the Bay Area and cities across the country. And if you don't hear much about it, it might have to do with the stigma associated with the problem, because the invaders are bedbugs.

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A Berkeley man suffered scars from the bedbugs he said attacked him at local homeless shelter.

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Housing director Drew King oversees the shelter in downtown Berkeley, which is about to spend close to \$50,000 to eradicate the pests. He's also learned the shelter isn't alone.

"We looked through the Internet and found bedbug task forces in place," said King.

"They're kind of reddish brown, kind of roach-like in appearance, kind of flat like a roach," said the man.

The bedbugs, which were all but wiped out by the 1950's, appear to be storming back.

Entomologist Vernard Lewis studies the pests in his lab at the University of California, and says the banning of strong pesticides like DDT may have let the species off the ropes.

And it's also left experts struggling to control outbreaks in homes and hotels across the country.

"I get agencies calling me, I've been charting this good three years," said Lewis, Ph.D.

The tiny bugs are hard to spot until they grow bigger, by feeding on the blood of their usually sleeping victims. They're not believed to spread blood born diseases, they are extremely hard to eradicate.

Dr. Lewis says researchers are developing a new generation of pheromone based traps, and are studying other high-tech methods.

One of the most environmentally friendly involves heat. Companies like Thermapure, now go after bedbugs using elaborate infra-red panels that turn entire rooms into a kind of convection oven.

"It's about 132 degrees. We're getting up to get rid of bed bugs," said exterminator Nick Pandeli.

Pandeli uses heat kills the bugs and their eggs, in clothing, bedding, even under the carpeting. And in the last few months, his crews have hit jobs around the Bay Area.

"Five-star hotels, homes, anywhere you're visiting and they'll jump in your bag, collapse here, they don't discriminate," said Pandeli.

Back at the shelter, directors say they'll probably choose the heat method to avoid spraying pesticides in the sleeping areas.

All welcome news for the residents just hoping to sleep tight and, you know the rest.

The heat treatment you saw a few minutes ago runs about \$500 per

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