**Give Pests the Cold Shoulder This Winter**

As cooler temperatures approach, so does the winter pest season. Now is the time of year when you might see – and hear – evidence of cold-weather invaders. Rodents, plant bugs, ladybugs, box elder bugs and cluster flies commonly seek shelter in homes during the winter months, in search of what every creature wants: warmth, food and water.

Of the common winter pests, rodents are perhaps the greatest health threat. They carry a variety of diseases and can transmit them to humans through their urine, droppings, fleas, and in rarer cases, bites.

“Rats and mice have very flexible skeletons, so if their heads can squeeze through a space – typically as tiny as a quarter or even a dime – they can fit their entire bodies through the gap,” says Dr. Zia Siddiqi, Ph.D., an entomologist with pest control company Orkin.

Once inside, they may chew their way through walls and electrical wiring, often causing structural damage.

“Most people don’t realize that cold-weather pests pose a problem until there’s a full-fledged infestation,” says Dr. Siddiqi. “Preventing pest entry in the fall helps protect your home from any surprises in the winter.”

Orkin recommends the following tips to help keep rodents out during the cooler months:

* Seal gaps and holes inside your apartment or condo unit to help prevent rodents from entering. Look carefully for gaps at the bottom of exterior doors. If you can stick a pencil under the door, then a rodent can enter. Install weather stripping or contact our office to close any gaps around outer doors.
* Keep the interior of your home clean, storing all food and garbage in properly sealed containers. Don’t leave dishes in the sink or pet food out overnight.
* Wipe down counters and other surface areas in kitchens daily.
* Clean any spills immediately, even if it is just water.

In addition to carrying disease, some winter pests prove difficult to find and control. At the first hint of a pest infestation, call our office so we can have a licensed pest control professional inspect and treat as needed.

For more tips on pest prevention in your home or business, visit orkin.com.