

Pests Find Pet Stores Irresistible!



Pet food is a common source of insect pests. Scientists surveyed eight retail pet stores in Kansas for insect pests during a seven month period, and collected an amazing **30 species** and over **41,000 insects**. The insects were most often concentrated near bulk food bins, in stockrooms, and on shelves holding wild bird seed and food for small animals.

When pet food is brought home, it should be considered a potential source of pests. These pests then infest and contaminate human and other pet foods if they can break into the packaging.

Always inspect pet food before you bring it home. Besides looking for beetles, moths, and small caterpillars, check for holes in bags or boxes where insects may be emerging, tears or gaps where moths and beetles could get through the packaging and infest the food, and webbing produced by caterpillars or moths.

Discovery!

New Rodent Found

A rodent never described by scientists was found for sale recently in an open-air food market in Laos. The discovery is extraordinary because it represents an entire new family of rodents, and for all we know, it could be the last remaining mammal family left to be discovered. The last previous mammal family discovered was over 30 years ago—the bumblebee bat, the smallest mammal on earth.

This new rodent has been called a *rock rat*, but it is an oddball that looks perhaps more like a cross between a squirrel and a porcupine than a rat. It is about 16 inches long from nose to tail, with stubby legs and a furry tail. It apparently feeds at night on plants and lives in limestone outcroppings in forests, but since scientists have still not found any alive, its habits remain largely mysterious.

These animals, along with rats, squirrels, and porcupines, are hunted and eaten by the local peoples.

Your Questions Answered

Q. Can cats transmit plague to humans?

A. There have been 23 human plague cases in this country since 1977 where infected cats were the carriers. Plague is caused by a bacterium that is usually transmitted by flea bites, but can also be transmitted in air-borne droplets when an infected cat or other animal, or human, coughs.

Cats can become infected with plague when they hunt infected rodents. Signs of an

infection in cats include high fever, swollen lymph nodes, or respiratory problems like sneezing or coughing. Any cat that shows these symptoms should be taken to a veterinarian.



Plague is usually curable in its early stages, but can be fatal if not treated. Most cases of plague occur in New Mexico, Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada and Oregon.

Wasps Being Trained as Bloodhounds



Tiny, non-stinging wasps may soon become important tools in the war against terrorism. Using sugar water as a reward, wasps can now be trained to detect an odor in as little as five minutes. Not only can they be used to

sniff out explosives, poisons, and dead bodies, but they can even detect cancer by "sniffing" a person's breath.

The wasps are placed in a special hand-held chamber that is equipped with a tiny fan that sucks in air. If the wasps detect the odor they have been trained to find, they cluster around the vent opening. This creates pixels that show up on a tiny webcam, which in turn sends a signal to a laptop computer. Using different technology, scientists have already shown that honey bees can be trained and used to detect odors from land mines.

Did You Know?

⇒ **He should have known better!** In January, a homeowner in New Mexico caught a mouse inside his house, and not knowing what to do with it, threw it outside into a pile of burning leaves. The mouse's fur caught on fire, but then it ran back into the man's house, setting the house on fire. No one was hurt, but the home and everything in it was destroyed. The man related the entire sorry experience from his motel room.



⇒ **Back in the day...**As more bacteria are showing signs of resistance to modern antibiotics, physicians are turning back to fly maggots for help. Larvae of some species of flies eat decaying flesh, and since ancient times these "*medicinal maggots*" have been placed into leg ulcers, bedsores, and wounds to clean them out right down to sound flesh. This speeds healing that might not occur otherwise. Medicinal maggots are removed from the wound when their job is done.