

BROKEN ARROW

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Why Year-Round Pest Control Is An Essential Service

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Just when one thinks 2020 could not get any creepier, despite this year of quarantine and social distancing there are strangers among us that pay no heed to social distancing rules. A study conducted by entomologists (the folks that have a strange love for bugs) about four years ago proved that even the cleanest, tidiest, well-kept homes are full of hundreds of arthropods. The term “arthropod” refers to invertebrate animals having an exoskeleton, a segmented body, and paired jointed appendages (arms, antennae and legs that have joints, like humans, just way more creepy and offensive) and include things like lobsters, crabs, spiders, mites, insects, centipedes, and millipedes. Understandably most homes do not have lobsters and crabs running around, however the worst part of this study was that there were still hundreds of various types of species found in those hundreds of arthropods found in the homes studied.

Simply stated, the interior of most homes in the United States contain a veritable arthropod jamboree. Literally.

Here is the proof: The study was conducted in Raleigh, North Carolina in 2016 as a biodiversity study (basically a closer study of things like how multi-species of bugs interact, where they live, who their friends are, where they work, etc.) but its findings in correlation to pest management are incredibly impactful. The researchers randomly selected fifty volunteers who owned or rented single-family homes in or around Raleigh. They examined and collected more than ten thousand arthropods from a total of 554 rooms throughout the houses. Noting in what type of room the organisms were collected the result ended with only five rooms of the 554 where the researchers collected ZERO specimens: four bathrooms and one bedroom. In fact the hundreds of species of arthropods was said to be a “very conservative” list of the different types of bugs in every home because it was a measurement of the “morphospecies”, the bugs that the average Joe can identify—spiders, flies, etc. Plus, the researchers only looked in rooms, not between walls, under the floors or baseboards. There is no telling what could have been hidden behind walls and under floors!

Need some good news? Most of the bug critters in Oklahoma homes, including some of the ones you can see, and many of the ones you cannot, are harmless and can and do live in complete harmony with us. However, the ones we consider harmful pests or nuisances are the perpetrators that must be managed with proper pest control on a year-round basis.

Why “year-round” pest management? Most homeowners are under the impression that, for instance, if ants invade in the Spring a one-time service will do the job. While for some ant colonies this may bode true, ninety-nine percent of the time the ants come back. Some also believe that if their home has spiders, that is the only bug they have. Spiders move inside for food, particularly this time of the year. Spiders eat other insects and spiders. (Now for one of “Farrah’s favorite pest control tips”: spiders are our friends. Unless a person has arachnophobia, or of course the spiders are the venomous spiders of Oklahoma—the Brown Recluse or Black Widow, then they are dangerous and pest control is a must.) Rodents are also a problem for Oklahoma homes and can cause thousands of dollars of damage before a homeowner even knows they have moved in. A year-round pest control plan can include rodent bait boxes outdoors that will bait the rats and mice to not enter and become unwanted roommates. Not to mention rodents carry diseases that can be passed to humans and pets through fecal matter, the bacteria left behind and can even contaminate the air inside the home often causing allergic reactions all many times with-

out a homeowner knowing they are even inside. Rodent infestations are vastly becoming a year-round problem, where once thought to be only a fall/winter issue. Another example of an uncommon pest many homeowners are unaware of are carpet beetles. Although the bugs have long been associated with damaging carpets by eating the fibers, they feed on any type of natural fiber. So those holes you found that sweater? Holes in soft fabrics are more likely to be caused by carpet beetles rather than moths. Year-round pest management prevents the pest's homeowners are not even aware they are living with.

Year-round pest management keeps homes protected on a seasonal basis. Most companies provide monthly or quarterly maintenance plans and tailor each visit to the impending seasonal pests. Here are just some of the common pests for each season in Oklahoma (in addition to some year-round pests not listed):

- **Spring:** ants, mosquitoes*, termites*, spiders, flies, bees, wasps, roaches
- **Summer:** fleas, ticks, rodents, spiders, roaches, flies, wasps, ants, mosquitoes*, termites*
(basically EVERYTHING)
- **Fall:** fleas, ticks, rodents, roaches, stinkbugs, spiders, wasps, carpet beetles, mosquitoes*, termites*
- **Winter:** rodents, roaches, spiders, carpet beetles, termites*

Ready for another "Farrah's favorite pest control tip"? Most homeowners do not realize a year-round pest management plan prevents the need to ever have pesticide inside the home. A good pest control technician's main goal is to manage the exterior of the home only when servicing on a quarterly basis. The technician works with the homeowner to determine a plan to prevent pests from ever entering the home, first by laying down a barrier each time they are there and finding entry points where pests could possibly enter.

Lastly, year-round pest control costs less than if a home needed multiple individual pest services in the same year. Simply put, homeowners save money on the services, and save money on potential damage repairs.

A good pest control company's job is to seamlessly integrate into a homeowner's busy life. And part of enjoying a home is to be worry-free about pests attacking family or pets, or unknowingly sharing space with uninvited rodents or cockroaches. After all, in this creepy 2020 world no one should have to worry about pests, those seen or unseen.



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