

KEYNOTES/

ADVICE

5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT BEDBUGS

A recent survey conducted by the National Pest Management Association and the University of Kentucky found that 95 percent of U.S. pest-management professionals encountered a bedbug infestation in the past year. Compare that to pre-2000 statistics, when only 25 percent of U.S. survey respondents reported fighting such an infestation.

This bedbug epidemic has created an increased need for education and awareness among travelers, and meeting planners can help their hotel partners by educating attendees about bedbug basics:

- 1. Bedbugs in hotels tend to be isolated incidents.** Typically, a guest or staffer has brought the pests into a room unknowingly and the infestation is not a hotelwide problem or a sign of unsanitary conditions.
- 2. Be wary of Web sites.** Many Web sites claim to have information about which hotels have bedbugs but the sites don't ever verify whether the postings are true.
- 3. Hotels are proactive.** Most hoteliers have educated their employees about bedbug detection and have worked with pest-management companies to create a control plan. Ask your venue about its plan.
- 4. Know how to check a room.** When attendees arrive in a hotel room, they should put their luggage in the bathroom or on another tiled surface—never on the bed—then thoroughly inspect the room before unpacking. Look behind the headboard, in sofas and chairs, and in the seams of the mattress, box spring, and dust ruffle for bedbug stains, shed skins, and bugs themselves. If guests spot signs of bedbugs, they should



be moved to a new room—one that's not adjacent to the room that's believed to be infested.

- 5. Take precautions on returning home.** Bedbugs like to travel and will hide in suitcases, laptop bags, boxes, and shoes to be near a food supply. Advise attendees to inspect suitcases before bringing them into their homes and vacuum them thoroughly before storing away. Wash all clothes from the trip, whether worn or not, in hot water, and dry on a high dryer setting—or take them to the dry cleaner.

—Missy Henriksen

Missy Henriksen is vice president of public affairs for the National Pest Management Association, Fairfax, Va.