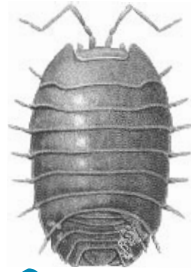




# Effective Control of Sowbugs, Pillbugs, Centipedes, and Millipedes



June 1999

**T**his foursome of creepy crawlers has a lot in common. For instance, they are not true insects, they enjoy the same type of living space and, in fact, are not harmful creatures — merely unattractive and considered a nuisance.

## Description

Sowbugs and pillbugs are interesting, armadillo-like creatures. Strangely enough, they belong to the same class of animals as lobsters and shrimps! These tiny land crustaceans require moist conditions to survive and like to live under rocks or debris such as damp, decaying leaf litter.



Sowbugs and pillbugs carry their eggs in a pouch for about three weeks until they hatch, and continue to carry the young for a few months after hatching. They may have several broods in a year.

Millipedes, sowbugs and pillbugs feed on decaying organic matter. They usually die quickly once inside the home because the environment is too dry. A persistent infestation of these creatures indoors may indicate a serious moisture problem within the home, and the presence of a food source.



Wormlike millipedes and centipedes look similar because both have many body sections and many legs. There are several basic differences. The centipede has only one pair of legs per section, while the millipede has two pairs. Also, the centipede's legs are much longer, allowing it to move more quickly.

Centipedes and millipedes lay eggs in the soil in the spring and fall. The young molt several times as they mature, acquiring additional body sections and legs with each molting. They mature at three years of age, and they may live as long as five or six years.

Centipedes are night-time predators. They like to eat other home invaders like spiders, carpet beetles or ants. In fact, centipedes are an efficient way of controlling other insect pests in your home!

## The House Centipede



Originally from Mexico, house centipedes are now among the most common centipedes in North America. They will invade houses if the sub-floor, drains, basement or bathroom areas are excessively damp. They will also come indoors in the fall when the weather turns colder. House centipedes possess the unique ability to reproduce indoors. They can move quickly and will hide in cracks, crevices, and behind baseboards. They sometimes like to hide under the bark of firewood stored inside the home.

It is true that centipedes have the ability to inflict bites, which are similar to bee stings. House centipedes, however, rarely bite and do not possess jaws powerful enough to break the skin easily. Generally, it is the southern and more exotic species that are capable of inflicting serious bites.

## Control

Sowbugs, pillbugs and millipedes break down organic matter, releasing nutrients to garden plants, and centipedes help control other insect pests. For these reasons, this group can be considered beneficial and should be tolerated as much as possible.

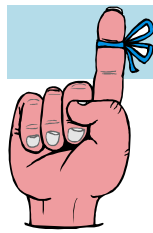
## Physical Control

- remove leaf litter and decaying vegetation around the foundation of the home
- use coarse mulches that allow water to drain
- foundation plantings should be pruned and cleaned to improve ventilation around the home
- allow the soil to dry between waterings
- repair cracks in foundation walls or around windows before autumn
- indoors, use a dehumidifier or a small electric fan to dry out damp areas in the basement
- try using a sticky trap in areas of the home where there is excess humidity
- diatomaceous earth (salt water fossils) may also be used in cracks and crevices as an ongoing control measure

# Chemical Control

Changing the habitat of these creatures should reduce their numbers. If these efforts do not result in adequate control, you may choose to use a registered domestic-class pesticide product. The active ingredients registered include propoxur, diazinon, permethrin, pyrethrin, methoprene and others.

Some products are sprayed onto foundations, while others are applied indoors in cracks and crevices, along baseboards and across thresholds. **Read the label to be sure the product is intended for use inside the home.**



## Remember

### *Before Purchasing a Pesticide Product*

- Identify the pest correctly.
- Use physical control methods and alternatives to pesticides.
- Read the label directions and safety precautions before buying the product. The label must include the name of the pest to be controlled and the treatment location (e.g., indoor, outdoor, garden uses, pet treatment).
- Purchase only the quantity of product needed for the treatment.
- Alternatively, you may choose to hire a licensed pest control operator.

### *When Using a Pesticide*

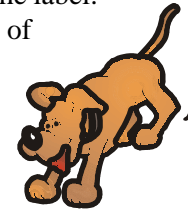
- Carefully read all label instructions and precautions before using pesticides.
- Do not drink, eat or smoke while applying pesticides.
- Persons and pets should vacate the area during treatment. Cover or remove aquaria.
- If kitchen area is to be treated, cover or remove food, dishes and utensils.

### *After Handling a Pesticide*

- Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling any pesticide product.
- Do not permit persons or pets to contact treated surfaces until residue has dried completely.
- Provide adequate ventilation of treated areas after use.
- Wipe clean all surfaces that comes in direct contact with food, such as counters, tables and stovetops, including indoor and outdoor surfaces.
- Always store pesticides out of reach of children and pets and away from food and beverages.

### *In Case of Accidental Poisoning*

- Call a poison control centre immediately and seek medical attention.
- Take the pesticide container or label with you to the emergency facility or physician.
- Follow first aid statements on the label.
- In case of accidental poisoning of pets seek veterinary attention immediately.



### *When Disposing of Pesticides*

Do not reuse empty pesticide containers. Wrap and dispose of in household garbage.

Unused or partially used pesticide products should be disposed of at provincially or municipally designated household hazardous waste disposal sites.

### *Use Common Sense*

- These are general recommendations.
- Consult the label for specific instructions.
- When in doubt, contact a professional.

**Pest Management Regulatory Agency**  
2250 Riverside Drive  
Ottawa ON K1A 0K9

**Pest Management Information Service**  
Telephone: 1-800-267-6315  
From outside Canada: (613) 736-3799\*  
\*Long distance charges apply.  
Fax: (613) 736-3798  
Internet: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pmra-arla](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pmra-arla)