

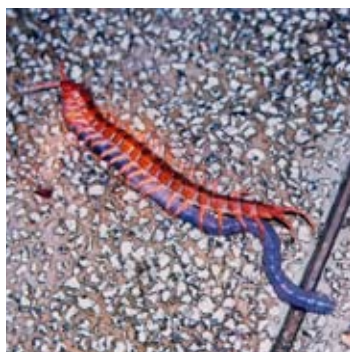
INSIDE
THIS
ISSUE

Centipedes Vs Millipedes

Urticating moths and their control

Centipedes Vs Millipedes

Centipedes and millipedes are not uncommon creatures encountered in gardens and leaf litters. They belong to the Class Chilopoda and could be differentiated from insects by their lack of 3 distinct body parts (Head, thorax and abdomen) and possess numerous pairs of legs. Their bodies have a number of segments. The bodies of the centipedes and millipedes are covered with a hard substance, the cuticle, which forms the exoskeleton. Both the centipedes and millipedes are born in the stage of egg. There are a few features that could distinguish centipedes from millipedes.



A centipede feeding on a poisoned earthworm



Millipedes

Prevention and Control of Centipedes and Millipedes

Centipedes and millipedes are difficult to control alone with pesticides. Active control of centipedes and millipedes is not suggested as they pose little public health threat. Millipedes are even beneficial animals which help the breakdown of organic matter in soil into nutrients

for plants. The following environmental modifications could discourage invasion of centipedes and millipedes into homes:

1. Remove all trash, logs, leaf litters, boards, stones, bricks and other disused objects from around the premises;
2. Keep organic refuse in refuse container covered with well-fitted cover;
3. Keep food in refrigerator or container covered with well-fitted cover;
4. Repair cracks and crevices on walls and floors with cements;
5. Keep grass closely mowed near the premises;
6. Trim bushes and overhanging tree branches away from the house as tree branches provide path to the premises for these occasional invaders;
7. Install metal or rubber stripes around loose fitting doors and windows; and
8. Keep window screens in good repairs. Make sure they fit tightly in the window frame.

Centipedes

Centipedes, or known as the 'Hundred Leggers' are elongated, flattened animal bearing one pair of legs per each body segment. The most commonly encountered centipedes have less than 31 pairs of legs. Centipedes prefer damp and dark places (such as under stones and leaf mulch). They may invade homes occasionally for finding food. Centipedes are mainly predacious. They possess a pair of poisonous claws, which facilitate them to prey on small insects or animals. They readily attack preys but try to escape when they sense that they are in danger. However, they would try to protect themselves with their claws. Most centipedes' bites only produce local effects but some people may be allergic to the venom of some species. Therefore, people attacked by a centipede should seek medical consultation as soon as possible.

Millipedes

Millipedes, or known as the 'Thousand Leggers' are elongated, cylindrical animals bearing two pairs of legs per each body segment. Most of millipedes possess fewer than a hundred pairs of legs. Millipedes are usually found outdoors, where they feed on rotted plant materials or detritus. They do not have poison claws. Most millipedes will curl up when poked.

As arthropod pests such as cockroaches could attract centipedes, prevention and control of arthropod pests found in the premises has to be carried out soonest possible for eliminating the attractant. As millipedes do no harm to us, millipedes found in our premises could be picked up with tools and relocated to scrubby area or vegetated area at a distant from the premises.

Urticating moths and their control

Health Hazards Caused by Lepidopteran caterpillars

Caterpillars (larvae) of several species in at least eleven Lepidopteran families possess urticating hairs that are one of their primary defense mechanisms. Urticating hairs refer to the barbed hairs that cover the dorsal and posterior surface of caterpillar's abdomen. These hairs can be detached from the caterpillar and embedded in other animal's skin or eyes, thus inducing physical irritation. The reactions can last for several hours or days. It seems likely that the hairs cause an accumulative reaction in people. If urticating hairs get into eyes, irritation and inflammation can be severe and may cause blindness. Inhalation may also cause asthma and other respiratory problems. The scales of certain adult moths may also cause urticaria. The common species that could be found locally is *Perina nuda* (榕透翅毒蛾). The larva of *Perina nuda* is shown in figure 1.

Photo taken by PCAS/FEHD



Figure 1. The larva of *Perina nuda*

Disinfestation of Lepidopteran caterpillars

To remove Lepidopteran caterpillars which live gregariously on trees or vegetation, a jet of water may be used for flushing down the caterpillars. The caterpillars may also be knocked down by space spraying of insecticide with knockdown effect. Water should be used as the carrier for the spraying.

The caterpillars and adults knocked down must be collected carefully into a thick plastic bag with the help of tools. The live insect in the bag can be killed by spraying with insecticide with knockdown effect.

Safety Precautions

To avoid breathing in the scales of the adult moth and any detached hairs from the larvae, people participated in handling the insect problem must wear disposable masks, long-sleeved shirts and trousers. The person who is responsible for washing down or carrying out space spraying against the caterpillars/adult moths should wear goggles as well. For those who are responsible to collect the caterpillars and adult moths, they have to put on rubber gloves. The gloves should be washed by flushing with plenty of water before removing them. Physicians should be consulted for treatment in case of getting allergic reaction caused by the caterpillars/adult moths.