

Pest of the Month

Widow Spiders



Black Widow with egg casing

Although it is true that human deaths have occurred from widow spider bites, it is important to note that modern fatalities from widow bites occur in less than 1 percent of all people bitten. The chances of dying are so low that one researcher compared the chances of dying from a widow spider bite to your chances of being struck by lightning.



Black Widow underside view

Bites occur most often when someone accidentally presses the spider into his or her flesh by handling something on which the spider has attached its web. This is where the widow spider's habit of nesting in woodpiles or in between boxes and crates in garages and warehouses becomes significant. Additionally, adult females guarding egg sacs may also bite if their web is disturbed although they will usually flee. In general, widow spiders are a very timid group of spiders that will only bite when threatened.

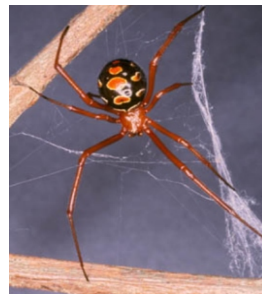
If you suspect that someone has been bitten by a widow spider, seek medical attention immediately and, if possible, bring the spider with you to the medical center for positive identification.



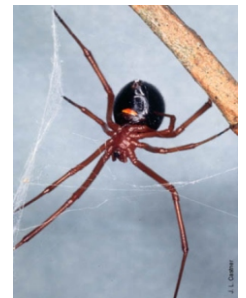
Brown widow top view



Brown widow underside view with egg casing



Red widow top view



Red widow underside view (note the hour glass is not complete)

Widow Spider Control Methods: Nonchemical (Prevention)

Exclusion: The best way of dealing with widow spiders is to prevent their entry into the building in the first place.

Prevent bites: Wear gloves when handling items that have been stored outdoors or in tool sheds.

Wear gloves when cleaning or vacuuming close spaces indoors.

Removal: If you discover a widow spider in or around your home the safest way to remove it is with a vacuum (hose attachment). With a vacuum you can remove the spider, the web, and egg sacs all in one safe step. Be sure to remove the bag from the vacuum immediately after use and throw it away outdoors.

Chemical

Widow spiders are typically not affected by general pesticide applications (baseboard sprays) because they avoid the treated areas. Individual widow spiders can be killed by direct application (to the spider itself) with a labeled pesticide but they may not die immediately and you risk an intoxicated spider running around loose in the house. By far, the non-chemical methods of prevention and removal are your best bet.