

# Home and Horticultural

# PESTS

## Clover Mites

Clover mites are tiny, reddish brown, eight-legged arthropods. Often overlooked outdoors, indoors they appear as small moving dots on light-colored walls, windows and windowsills. Although they typically invade homes during the spring, they may appear during cooler periods of the year. Clover mites can be identified by their extremely long front legs and the red stains produced when crushed.

### Life History and Habits

Clover mites are temperature sensitive. Thermometer readings of 75 F force eggs into summer dormancy. Temperatures above 85 F kill active mites. When cooler weather returns in the fall, eggs that had been deposited on trees and shrubs and around buildings hatch, and clover mite populations increase. Feeding on trees, shrubs, flowers, grasses and agricultural crops, they produce a generation in a month's time. Mite activities slow between late fall and early spring with eggs going dormant at temperatures below 40 F. With the combination of surviving mites and overwintered eggs, clover mite populations escalate rapidly as spring approaches.

Clover mites are dispersed in nature. Because heavy populations may kill or reduce the food quality of their host, they roam in search of suitable food. Clover mites are often concentrated on turfgrass, especially next to south and southwest exposures of structural foundations. Wandering mites have immediate access to openings and entryways through which they enter homes and buildings. Clover mites are more likely to be observed on south walls and windows, but they live indoors for only a short time. They do not bite, sting or transmit diseases. They are not structural pests and do not damage or feed on clothing, draperies, upholstery or carpeting. They do not infest or thrive on stored products. Except for the annoying red stains they produce when crushed, clover mites are harmless.



Rayanne Lehman

Clover mite  
actual size  $\frac{1}{50}$  inch

### Control

**Non Chemical** – Because clover mites enter from outside, it is a good idea to create a barrier between breeding and feeding sources and buildings and houses. Mites have difficulty negotiating bare soil, so an 18- to 24-inch strip around a structure can reduce the number of mites by 90 percent. It is easier for mites to cross the barrier if soil is hard. Periodically working the soil so it has a fine consistency hinders movements. Remove trash, debris and vegetation that bridge the barrier.

While exclusionary tactics may prevent larger arthropods from entering structures, it would be impossible to seal a structure securely enough to exclude the extremely small clover mites. Once inside, the only practical method for gathering clover mites without crushing them is with a vacuum cleaner attachment. Repeated vacuuming is required for the duration of the clover mite invasions.

**Chemical Treatments Outdoors** – It is logical to reduce or eliminate clover mite populations at their point(s) of origin. Apply an insecticide to a 15 to 20 foot grass or turf strip around building and homes. Treatments should coincide with cooler periods and active clover mite populations. Because insecticides are only effective against active mite stages, a follow-up spray (or two) is advised to eliminate “new mites” originating from eggs that were unaffected by the original treatment. An additional deterrent against wandering mites is to apply a barrier treatment to the 18-24 inch strip, as well as to the foundation and sides of buildings and homes.

Because there are numerous products registered for homeowner use against clover mites, not all retailers carry all product brands. Frequent label changes make it impractical to list all products registered with the Kansas Department of Agriculture. Homeowners should visit local retail outlets to determine product availability. Read the label to determine whether the product is registered against the target pest and specified for use at the site. See page 2 for a partial list of products labeled for control of clover mites.

Products labeled for use against Clover Mites		
Active Ingredient	Trade Name	Label Statements
bifenthrin	Ortho-Klor Termite and Ant Killer	For use on lawns and house foundations. Not for use in dwellings.
	Ortho Home Defense	Clover mites not listed on product label but are listed on Web site label. www.HomeDefenseMax.com
cyfluthrin	Bayer Advanced Garden Multi Insect Killer	For use on house foundation and nearby tall grass. On lawns clover mites are not listed separately but product can be used because the site is specified.
deltamethrin	Enforcer BugMax365	For use on outdoor surfaces.
lambda-cyhalothrin	Spectracide Bug Stop	For use indoors. On outdoor surfaces, clover mites not listed singly but can be used because the site is specified.
malathion	Green Thumb Malathion	For use on lawns.
permethrin	Bonide Termite and Carpenter Ant Killer	For use on outside surfaces.
	Green Thumb Home and Garden Bug Killer	For use in indoor spaces and outside the home.
	Green Thumb Multipurpose Insect Killer	For use on outside surfaces and foundations.
	Green Thumb Multipurpose Insect Control and Granules	For use as a band around home.
	HiYield Garden, Pet and Livestock Insect Control	For use on outdoor surfaces. On lawns clover mites are not listed individually but can be used because the site is specified.
	HiYield Indoor-Outdoor Broad Use Insecticide	For use on outdoor surfaces. On lawns clover mites are not listed separately but can be used because the site is specified. For use indoors in nonfood areas.
	HiYield Kill-a-Bug II Granules	For use on the lawn and as a band around the home.
	Terro Outdoor Ant Killer	For use as a perimeter treatment.
tralomethrin	Green Thumb RTU Home Insect Killer	For use indoors. For outdoor use clover mites are not listed individually but product can be used because the site is specified.

*Photo courtesy of Rayanne Lehman, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.*

### Author

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Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

MF-915

August 2006

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