

# CLOSE TO HOME

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### **Did You Know?**

- What's really in your cereal?
- Termites live in fences?
- The main cause for dryer fires?
- Ice damming can be prevented?

**Read the stories to find out more!**



## INDIAN MEAL MOTHS: A PEST FOR ALL SEASONS

Do you remember that famous nut bread that Grandma used to make every Christmas? Everyone used to look forward to that at the Christmas meal. What we didn't know was what happened to the leftover nuts. Nothing.

Like a gift nobody wanted, they stayed in a plastic bag in the pantry completely forgotten until one day some small moths appeared. The weather was getting warmer so no one thought twice about a few moths. Perhaps a door was left open one warm evening.

Several more weeks go by and a new discovery is made. Small, white worms are seen crawling on the pantry shelves, up the walls, and on the ceiling. Now comes the concern! Something is infested. A search is made and the plastic bag holding the nuts from Christmas is the source.

By this point, a full fledge infestation of Indian Meal Moths is underway that will



likely take several months to eliminate.

What do these moths look like, and where do they come from?

They are very small moths, about one quarter inch long. As seen in the picture, their wing tips are darkened as though they were dipped in ink.

Indian Meal Moths are strictly a food product pest, and will not infest clothing. They are most frequently found in foods like whole grains, seeds, nuts, and dried fruits. They also infest dried flowers (real flowers that is, not silk).

These moths are a very

common pest of food processors. Flour mills, pasta manufacturers, and others will hire industrial fumigators to control these pests.

The Department of Agriculture allows a certain parts per million of insect parts in grain foods. It would be nearly impossible to eliminate insects from our diet! As

a result, microscopic eggs of the moth are part of the products we purchase from the store.

Like all kinds of fertile eggs, time and proper temperature are all that is needed for incubation and hatching. Heated warehouses, grocery stores, and homes are a perfect environment year round for these food pests.

Indian Meal Moths are not simple to get rid of, but here are a few things you can do: Find the infested product and throw it out. Then, remove food products from the pantry, clean thoroughly the shelves and crevices, then have an exterminator treat the problem areas.

## SUBTERRANEAN SECRETS: TERMITE TIPS

**How do termites get into homes?** This column explores their most common entry points and explains why.

Termites live underground and eat wood products. It stands to reason that where wood/ground contact occurs

is a prime termite entry point.

Let's start with the yard. Wooden fences are often the first signal of termite activity. Check for mud tunnels and damage on the posts and slats. Mail box posts are another spot.

Basement/crawlspace windows and vents with wooden frames are often below grade. Wooden support posts in these areas often touch soil.

Watch out for cardboard laid in crawl spaces. Termites hear the dinner bell!

# Fraysier Home Inspections

94 Jefferson Ave.  
Fairport, NY 14450

*A Trusted Name In Real Estate*



**Phone:** 585-216-1085

**Fax:** 585-872-2447

## YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED HERE!

**Q. We recently had a repairman work on our dryer. He said that the long horizontal vent (20 feet) was dangerous and should be replaced due to fire hazard. Is the vent dangerous?**

A. The best way to vent a dryer is with metal, and with short runs. However, that does not mean horizontal runs are overly dangerous. Sometimes horizontal runs are necessary given the layout of plumbing and house construction. Here are a few safety tips to keep in mind.

First of all, use metal venting. The older plastic vents tend to collect lint and over long periods become fire hazards. Metal venting allows for less resistance, stronger venting, and less lint buildup.

When long horizontal venting is necessary, always use metal vent and hang the duct properly with hangers so the desired

pitch can be maintained over time. It is important to clean the vent a few times each year. A vacuum cleaner with a long attachment is ideal. Removing lint buildup in the dryer screen and vents is the key to safety.

### **ARE YOU SAFE?**

**Q. We have had a major problem with ice damming on our roof this year. Not only do we have the ice sickles, we have water leaking in over our kitchen window. What can be done?**

A. Ice damming occurs when snow on the roof melts from inside heat, and then refreezes on the eaves and gutters where it is cold. Ice forms in dams here and water works it's way



### **ASK JOHN!**

under shingles, into the house. Ice damming can cause major damage to ceilings and walls from water entry.

Damage from ice damming can be prevented with good attic ventilation and installing snow and ice shield under asphalt shingles.

As a Home Inspector, I find poor attic ventilation regularly.

Ice damming is a visible sign of this problem. Proper ventilation will insure a cold roof decking and minimal snow melt.

Snow and ice shield is a rubberized roofing installed over roof decking, with roof shingles on top. The shield is usually on the bottom six feet of roofing, and in valleys where icing is the biggest problem. Water and ice will not penetrate this layer and enter the house.

Roof raking and heat tape, though useful, are band aids to a larger problem that has a better solution.



### **Pest Problems and How They Affect Homebuyers.**

John will be teaching a continuing education course for real-

tors **February 27th**. Check the GRAR website for details, and see you there!