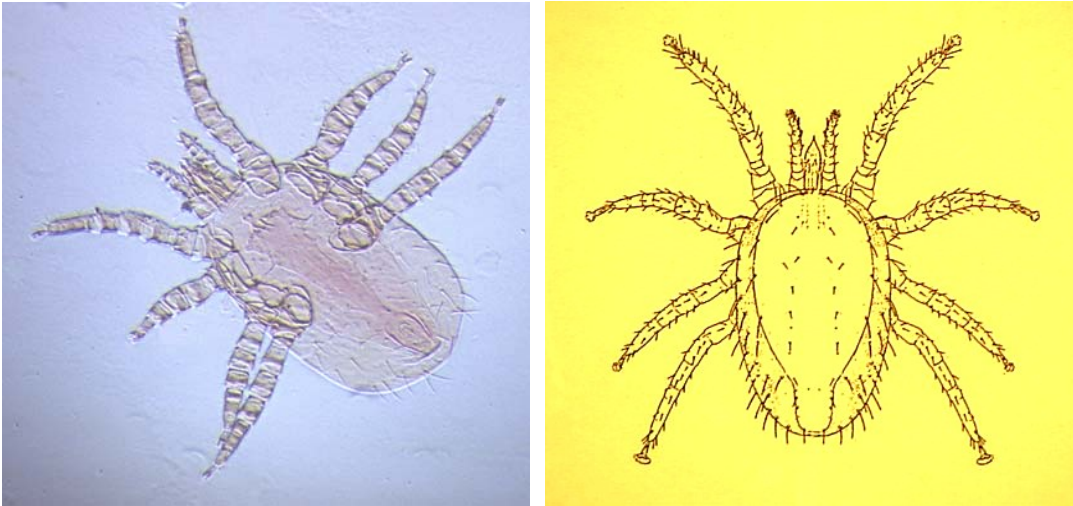


NORTHERN FOWL MITE



Common Name: Northern fowl mite
Scientific Name: *Ornithonyssus sylviarum*

Introduction. These mites get their common name of northern because they occur in temperate or northern regions, and of fowl because they are parasites of domestic fowl. They become a structural pest when they migrate from bird nests on/in buildings and attack humans, or crawl about on surfaces in living spaces. They are found throughout the temperate regions of the world including the United States.

Recognition. Northern fowl mites are very small, measuring 1/64-1/32 inch long. Mites are nearly white when unfed, bright red when recently fed, or gray to black with blood meal partly digested.

Similar Mites. The clover mite is about the same size and color as the northern fowl mite but usually appears indoors only in early spring and sometimes in autumn. The front pair of legs of the clover mite are twice the length of the other legs. With northern fowl mites, all four pairs of legs are about the same length.

Biology. Developmental stages include egg, larva, protonymph, deutonymph, and adult. Larvae have only 3 pairs of legs and do not feed before molting. The nymphs have 4 pairs of legs and the protonymph requires 2 blood meals before molting, whereas the deutonymph does not feed. After a blood meal, females usually deposit 2-3 eggs (range 1-5) at a time, mostly on the host. All immature mite development takes place on the host. Under favorable conditions, developmental time (egg to adult) may require only 5-7 days but usually takes longer. Adults spend most of their time on the host but may survive for 2-3 weeks off the host.

These mites are considered to be capable of transmitting fowl pox and are naturally infected with western equine encephalitis.

Habits. Problems in structures typically occur when bird nestlings leave the nest. The birds involved are usually pigeons, sparrows, starlings, robins, meadowlarks, grackles, chickens, etc. Hungry nymphs and adults migrate from the abandoned nests. Mites from building exterior nests usually come down the wall and enter via window frames or other openings in the exterior wall. Mites from interior nests usually come through the attic and enter via openings in the ceiling or interior wall surfaces. If mite populations become very large, at least some of the mites will migrate before nestlings leave.

An unusual habit of the life cycle is that the adults tend to mostly remain on the host. This gives heavily infested birds a grayish to blackish appearance. However, adults can also be found on nest debris as well as in crevices.

Cultural Control & Precautionary Measures. A vacuum cleaner fitted with hose and crevice attachments can be used to remove mites from indoor surfaces, using a light touch so as to avoid crushing the mites and creating a staining problem. If mite entry points can be located, clear silicone sealer can be used to exclude these crevices. It may be necessary to hot wash and hot dry bedding and clothing left on floor areas.

If people become infested, they can consult with their physician for a prescription or get an over-the-counter lotion labeled for the control of ectoparasitic mites.

Professional Control. Infestations in structures can usually be traced to bird nests in attics, under eaves, on windowsills or flat roofs, or in/on chimneys of unused fireplaces. Using an appropriately labeled pesticide, the nest(s) may be treated and removed by a Rottler pest management professional. Following removal, the surfaces where the nest(s) was/were located will also be treated. In infested rooms of the structure, if necessary, Rottler technicians will treat the cracks and crevices on the wall(s) and/or ceiling where the mites are entering and/or may be hiding. This combination of nest and crack and crevice treatments will usually give fairly quick relief.



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