

Millipedes, Centipedes, and Sowbugs

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DESCRIPTION: Millipedes are slow-moving, hard-shelled, wormlike, animals with two pairs of legs on each body segment. Millipedes have 30 or more pairs of short legs spaced uniformly along the entire length of their body. The adults are 1 to 2 inches long and are brown, tan or gray in color. Millipedes curl into a ball when disturbed.

House centipedes are flattened, elongated animals with one pair of extremely long legs per body segment. They are an inch or more in length, with a pair of long antennae springing from the head with 15 pairs of long legs arranged along the sides of the body. When disturbed, they move very rapidly.

Sowbugs and pillbugs are small, hard-shelled, tubular-bodied, segmented animals with 7 pairs of legs. Sowbugs have two prominent tail-like appendages that the pillbug does not have. Pillbugs roll up into a tight little ball when disturbed. Sowbugs are unable to do this.

LIFE CYCLE AND HABITS: Sowbugs, pillbugs, millipedes, and centipedes prefer moist locations. They are often found hiding in shrubbery beds, about the base of plants, or around the foundation of buildings where decaying, damp leaves accumulate. They are often found under objects on damp ground—such as clods, rocks, bits of manure, boards, and refuse piles. Storm sewers also provide a haven for sowbugs, pillbugs, and millipedes. At times, they will invade damp basement areas or crawl spaces as well as the first-floor level. When this happens, they are apt to be present in large numbers immediately outside the building. They are inactive in the winter. Most millipedes, sowbugs, and pillbugs are scavengers and feed on decaying plant material. But some species will feed on living plants, causing them to stunt, grow slowly or die, and the root system will be found to have been severely pruned. Millipedes overwinter as adults in protected areas and lay their eggs in the summer.

Seeking a place to hibernate in the fall of the year, millipedes become troublesome when they migrate into buildings. They swarm into basements and first-floor rooms and congregate heavily in garages. Large numbers of millipedes have been known to migrate into houses from mounds of dirt and refuse made by excavations in new subdivisions, where the unused soil is still filled with decaying vegetation. Occasionally, they congregate in lawns after heavy rains, but do no damage.

House centipedes live outdoors as well as indoors. In the home, they can be found in damp closets, bathrooms and in moist basements where they feed on insects and spiders.

NATURE OF INJURY: Sowbugs, pillbugs, and millipedes do not bite man nor cause damage in homes, but are annoying by their presence. However, in greenhouses they sometimes feed on roots and tender plant parts, especially those of bedding plants and seedlings. Normally, they feed on decaying vegetable matter in their outdoor habitat.

Some species of millipedes give off a foul-smelling fluid through openings along the sides of their body.

House centipedes are actually beneficial, causing no injury to stored products. If crushed, they may

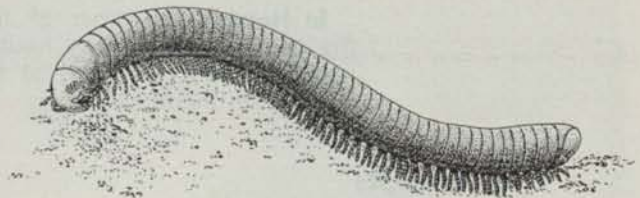
bite, causing some pain and swelling. Centipedes are annoying due to their habit of darting across floors or walls, often darting directly toward a person when they are suddenly disturbed.

CONTROL: Millipedes, centipedes, sowbugs and pillbugs may be controlled by removing and discarding all accumulations of leaves, rocks, boards and other trash around the foundation of buildings. In cases of serious infestation treat with either carbaryl (sevin) diazinon or trichlorfon. As sprays use at least 25 gallons of water per 10,000 square feet. Do not water for 72 hours after treatment. These may also be applied as granules. Consult the label for application rates.

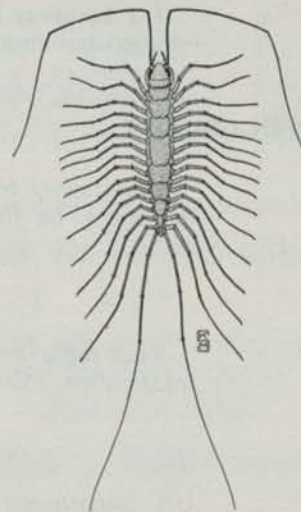
For control of these pests in the living quarters of the home, use a vacuum cleaner. But in basement areas or garages, sprays of 0.5 percent diazinon can be used.



Common Pillbug



Common Millipede



House Centipede