

# CONENOSE BUGS

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*Triatoma*, kissing bug, or China bedbug



*Rasahus thoracicus*, western spotted corsair

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Conenoses (known also as *Triatoma*, kissing bugs, or China bedbugs) live exclusively on the blood of animals, including man. They frequently attack sleeping humans at night. The bite from most species is painless and results in a localized reaction. Some people are sensitive to the bites of conenoses and may experience intense itching, nausea, flushed face, palpitation of the heart, rapid breathing and pulse, and hives. Such severe reactions may require medical attention.

The adult bug varies from very light to dark brown and from 3/4 to 1 1/2 inches in length. It has a long, narrow head and a slender, piercing beak that is bent beneath the head when not in use. The wings are folded back over the body and overlap at their tips, leaving a triangular area between the bases. Immature bugs resemble the adults, but do not have wings and are much smaller.

The adult females lay eggs in summer months. The eggs hatch in 2 to 5 weeks and the young nymphs take blood meals in between growth periods until after the fifth nymphal stage when they become adults. The cycle from egg to adult usually takes 1 year.

Conenose bugs live in the nests of wood rats (*Neotoma*, pack rats), but also invade the beds of human beings. In California they sometimes are found flying to lights and at such times they may fly into houses. Residents of foothill areas surrounding the Central Valley and of the foothills and desert areas of southern California are most often troubled by these pests.

Conenose bugs have been found naturally infested with the microscope parasite that causes Chagas' disease in man. However, no human cases of the disease have been reported in California.

The western spotted corsair, *Rasahus thoracicus*, is an insect that looks somewhat like the conenoses and is included with them. It has an orange and black body and an orange spot on each wing.

The feeding habits of the western spotted corsair are quite different from those of the *Triatoma* bugs, since it feeds on other insects. It is frequently attracted to lights in warm areas of California and, if picked up or handled carelessly by man, it may inflict a painful bite, the effect of which is at least as severe as that of a bee sting.

## WHAT TO DO

There is no specific treatment for the bite of these bugs. Warm compresses of magnesium sulfate applied to the bite are recommended. Call a doctor if the symptoms are severe or if a secondary infection results.

To prevent invasions by *Triatoma* bugs, screen your house and make it insect-proof. Remove wood rat nests from around the dwelling, especially from underneath. Wood rats often nest in piles of cactus pads or mesquite in desert regions or in piles of sticks in forested areas.

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This information is provided to help homeowners with their pest problems. Insecticides may be purchased at nurseries, hardware, farm supply, and pet stores. If additional help is needed, contact with a registered pest control operator is suggested.

No endorsement of trade names or products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

PRECAUTIONS

1. Handle insecticides with care and follow instructions on the label.
2. Do not use around open flame or exposed foods, and always clean food preparation areas after the use of pesticides.
3. Store out of reach of children and pets, preferably in locked cabinets.
4. Never keep pesticides in anything other than the original container.
5. Never reuse the pesticide container to store any other materials.
6. Dispose of all empty containers properly by placing them in the trash can for removal to the local disposal area.



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