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What Are The Dark, Multi-Legged Worms In My Basement?

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ask A Specialist

A weekly question/answer column

What Are The Dark, Multi-legged Worms In My Basement?

Alan Roe and Diane Alston answer:*

If you are finding dark, multi-legged worms in your basement, most likely they are millipedes or "thousand-legged worms." Millipedes have two pair of legs per segment, and typically have 30 or more body segments. As they grow, they shed their skin several times and add segments and legs at each molt. Usually only one generation is produced per year.

- Millipedes have a high moisture requirement and are usually found in damp, dark places such as under leaves, rocks or boards, in rotting wood and in the soil. To seek protection from winter, they are attracted to places like window wells, under door bottoms and basement steps.
- Many will die this time of year when it gets cold and snow stays on the ground. When they die, they usually coil up like a watch spring.
- Since millipedes don't survive long without moisture, their continued presence indoors is often an indication of some kind of moisture problem. Be sure your foundation and basement windows and doors are adequately caulked and sealed.
- Millipedes are harmless to people, pets and structures and are considered a nuisance pest only. Rather than spray for them indoors, it is just as easy to sweep or vacuum them up.

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* Alan Roe is Utah State University Extension Insect Diagnostician and Diane Alston is Utah State University Extension Entomologist