



Fact Sheet No. 53
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CENTIPEDES

Centipedes are not insects. They belong in a class all by themselves. They are classified as follows:

- Kingdom . . . Animal
 - Phylum . . . Arthropoda
 - Class . . . Chilopoda

Insects belong in the Class Insecta.

These wormlike creatures are characterized by having elongate, flattened bodies with 15 or more pairs of legs. Each body segment bears a single pair of legs.

They normally live outdoors where they prefer damp situations. Like millipedes and sowbugs, they are often found under stones, dead leaves, old boards, and in rubbish. Another favorite habitat is under bark or in rotten logs. They can run rapidly and their flattened body makes it possible for them to squeeze into cracks and crevices.

Centipedes are not known to injure plants or household furnishings. People may fear them because of their appearance and because they have small, poisonous glands in the claws on their first pair of appendages. They inject this poison into insects and other tiny creatures they capture. Most specimens we find in Utah are relatively small and very rarely, if ever, bite man. Larger centipedes, such as those found in the tropics, are reported as being able to inflict a painful bite.

Centipedes are predators of insects and other small organisms and in a sense, are considered as being beneficial; however, they are not popular with the average home dweller. The common house centipede, which is characterized by having long legs, often enters houses where it prefers the sink and drain areas. It is reported to be harmless to man.

We have no specific control recommendations for these animals. Due to the fact that they are usually present in small numbers and are very mobile, treating an area with an insecticide isn't always practical. If centipedes are a nuisance in or around the home, the home dweller should consider cleaning away any trash, dead leaves, old logs, or boards which might be harboring them.

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