



**Issue:** **Government Funded Bed Bug Research**

**Background:** Kept in check for much of the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, bed bug populations have rebounded over the last 10 years and the blood sucking pest is now found in all 50 states, commonly infesting single and multi-family housing, lodging accommodations, schools, hospitals, nursing homes, homeless shelters, college dormitories, and countless other settings.

Experts cite four primary reasons for the resurgent bed bug population: (1) increased international travel and a generally more mobile society, (2) loss of pesticide products that effectively controlled bed bugs; (3) more targeted, precise application techniques; and (4) resistance to current pesticide products.

Experts also believe the problem will continue to grow as bed bug populations become even more deeply entrenched and additional bed bug strains develop resistance. Since significant bed bug populations have only resurfaced over the last several years, very little meaningful research has been done in the last 50 years, and such research is essential to ultimately better controlling this pest. Because of the relatively small size of the bed bug product market and the high cost of developing new products, there may not be sufficient incentives for the private sector to develop new, safe and effective bed bug control products.

Over the last 25 years, Congress has authorized research programs for two significant urban insect pests – the red imported fire ant (RIFA) and Formosan subterranean termites. While those pests are economically very significant, their significance pales in scope to the bed bug. As opposed to the RIFA and Formosan subterranean termite, bed bugs are in all 50 states and the scope of their economic impact is so broad it is difficult to determine. What is clear, however, is that the spread of bed bugs is impacting consumer behavior and commerce: A recent Rasmussen poll found that 20 percent of people had recently changed travel plans to avoid public places because of fear of bed bugs.

**Position:** The National Pest Management Association urges the government – especially the US Congress – to authorize and make available additional funds for contemporary bed bug research. The program could be housed at the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s IR-4 program or Agricultural Research Service, in conjunction with land grant universities with structural pest management expertise.