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CLOVER MITES

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Clover mites are a common nuisance in and around Minnesota homes. Although most noticeable in the spring and again in the fall, they also may be troublesome on calm, sunny days in the winter. This pest is not an insect but a true mite slightly smaller than the head of a pin with a reddish or reddish-brown body. When the mites are crushed, they leave rusty or blood-red spots.

Clover mites actually do not damage a house, its furnishings, or even humans or animals. They feed primarily on the lawn where they suck sap from grasses, clover, and other plants. In the fall they sometimes gather in tremendous numbers on walls, windows, tree trunks, and other outside surfaces where they seek protected hiding places. They crawl into cracks around windows or in foundation walls and under siding, shingles, or shakes. This activity often leads many of the mites into homes where they can be seen on window sills, walls, tables, etc. — often in great numbers. But whether indoors or out, most of the mites will congregate on the sunny side of the house.

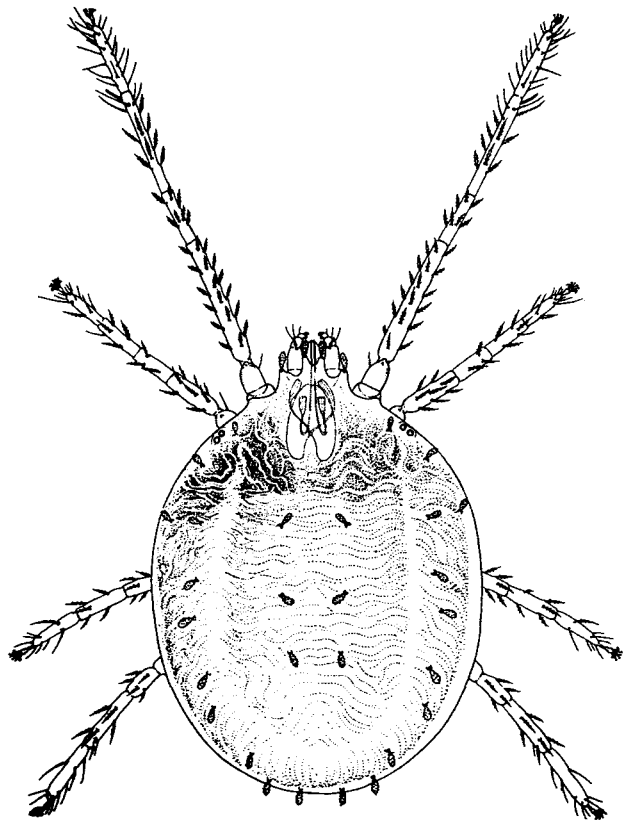
Cold weather tends to slow down or stop the mites' activity which resumes again in the spring. However, on especially sunny days, they may be seen even in the winter. With the advent of warm weather, the mites become active again and ultimately return to the lawns to feed.

CONTROL

Mites in the house are very difficult to control with any of the chemicals which are safe to use in homes. Wiping them up with a vacuum cleaner or an oily dustcloth is probably the simplest way to clean them up. A pyrethrum aerosol bomb will kill those mites hit directly by the spray but will give no residual action. Household insecticides containing diazinon or malathion painted around doors and windows may also help reduce the number of mites in the house.

The best answer to the problem is to prevent the mites from entering the home by spraying the outside walls and the lawn with effective miticides and to use a barrier of cultivated soil next to the foundation. Mites do not readily cross loose, clean cultivated soil; therefore a band about 18 inches wide all around the house, kept free of grass, would be an excellent deterrent. For decorative purposes, this strip may be planted to annuals, perennials, or shrubs but in such a way that mites cannot bridge across the barrier. The soil around such plantings should be kept cultivated — free of grass, weeds, and fallen leaves.

Another treatment which acts somewhat as a barrier is the application of oil right next to and on the foundation wall at the ground line. Regular motor oil may be used, but it should not contact any vegetation.



Clover mite

There are a number of miticides now available which will help control the clover mite problem. Any one of the sprays recommended here may be applied to the outside walls, foundations, and lawns. The best time to apply the spray is in the fall to prevent the movement of the mites to the house. Spraying should be done during the warmest part of the day when the mites are most active. Spray thoroughly around doors and windows and foundations. Some spray formulations may slightly discolor dark colored finishes. For best results on the lawn, the spray should be an actual drenching rather than a fine, mist-like spray. Spray 20 to 30 feet of the lawn around the house.

Use any one of the following:

- Malathion, 2 to 3 tsps. 50% emulsion concentrate plus Kelthane, 2 tbsps. 18½% wettable powder or 1 oz. 18½% emulsion concentrate in each gal. of water
- Tedion, 1 tbsp. 25% wettable powder per gal. of water
- Dicofol (Kelthane), 3 tbsps. 18½% wettable powder per gal. of water

Many of the commercial pest control operators have the equipment, materials, and experience to assist the homeowner in controlling this problem.

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