

Protect Your House From Insect Invasion

(NAPSA)—Don't let insects and other vermin bug you. Consider a few easy-to-follow tips to safely inspect and pestproof your home. The acronym INSPECT can be an easy way to remember the steps to quality pest control.

- **IN**vestigate—Inside, look for cracks in interior walls, open food containers, signs of droppings, vents to the outside, holes in screens, and dark and cool places in attics and basements where pests like to hide. Outside, seek cracks in exterior walls, small and large holes around the house, unsealed garbage cans, woodpiles and plants too close to the house, standing water where mosquitoes breed, yellow jacket nests in the ground and wasp nests in eaves and overhangs.

- **S**tudy—Diagnosing your problem is important so you can be sure the product you use to solve the problem is for the pest that needs managing.

- **P**repare—Identify the tools and resources you need. Your plan may include bringing in a pest control specialist, conducting better maintenance and making adjustments to your lifestyle. "One of the most common problems homeowners have is that they aren't sure which products to use," explained Janet Hurley, integrated pest management specialist with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. "Doing your research, talking to professionals and using products correctly are the quickest ways to effectively get rid of your problem."

- **E**liminate—Eliminate the opportunities for pests to make your home theirs. Indoors, remember to seal windows in tack, caulk gaps around windows and doors, and fix water leaks. Outdoors, consider pruning trees and shrubs away from the house, mowing and weeding regularly, mulching to reduce weeds in beds,



You don't have to put up with pests in and around your house if you heed a few hints.

keeping grass and dirt three inches from foundations, and ensuring proper drainage away from your house.

- **C**lean—Prevent future troubles by thoroughly cleaning your home and treating any potential problem areas. Put cereals, crackers or other food that usually comes in an open container into plastic containers with secure lids. Pests need food, and if they can't find any, they're more likely to leave.

- **T**reating for problems at the first sign or before they appear is key to keeping your home, lawn and community pest-free. This includes selecting and purchasing the products needed to take care of the problem and properly reading the label before use. Treating your lawn with fertilizer in the fall can also prevent weed problems in the future as healthy lawns discourage weed pressure. It's a good idea to teach your kids to be aware of the world around them. To help make it fun, www.debugthemyths.com has online activities and a storybook that help kids understand the difference between good bugs and bad ones. Adults can also visit that Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE) site for information about common pests, how to choose and use pest-control products safely and other useful tips.