

# Spider Control in Homes and Barns

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## SPIDER CHARACTERISTICS

Spiders are familiar to almost all of us. They have eight legs and two body parts—the abdomen and the cephalothorax (combined head and thorax), just as ticks, mites and daddy longlegs do. Insects, on the other hand, have six legs and three distinct body regions: the head, thorax and abdomen.

Approximately 1,000 different spider species roam about this country, living almost everywhere. Since spiders feed entirely upon living insects or small animals, they are beneficial. They usually lie in wait for their victim, some by building webs to trap their prey. Some spider species can be identified by the shape of their webs. For example, some build a funnel-shaped web; others build webs shaped like wagon wheels (see Figure 1).

Webs are made of fine silk threads produced by spinnerets located near the end of the spider's abdomen. Silk is secreted in a liquid form which hardens when exposed to air. Spiders use silk not only to make webs but also to line nests, to construct egg sacs and to make parachutes which some types use to travel great distances with air currents.

Spiders reproduce by laying eggs contained in an egg sac. These sacs frequently contain several hundred eggs, are usually ball shaped and may be carried by the female wherever she goes. Some species hide them in the web or sheltered places.

## DANGEROUS SPIDERS

Many people fear all spiders and consider them poisonous or dangerous to handle. In actuality, only two native species in the United States are capable of inflicting serious injury to humans. These are the brown recluse spider and the black widow spider. The black widow is not common in Wisconsin, and the brown recluse has never been sighted here to date. Both are more common in the South.

Correctly identifying spiders is quite difficult and generally done by individuals with special training. However, it is easy to determine whether a spider is a brown recluse or a black widow with the help of the drawings. Note that the generalized spider has eight eyes. Most spiders have eight eyes, while the brown recluse has only six. Although other types have six eyes, they are quite rare. To see and be able to count the eyes, you will need either a strong magnifying glass or a microscope.

The brown recluse spider is tan. With its legs extended, it is about the size of a nickel. While there are no markings on its capsule-shaped abdomen, both sexes have a dark brown violin-shaped mark on the top of its cephalothorax or front body region.

The black widow is jet black. With its legs extended, it would about cover a penny. The abdomen is spherical, and the female has a red or yellowish hourglass mark on

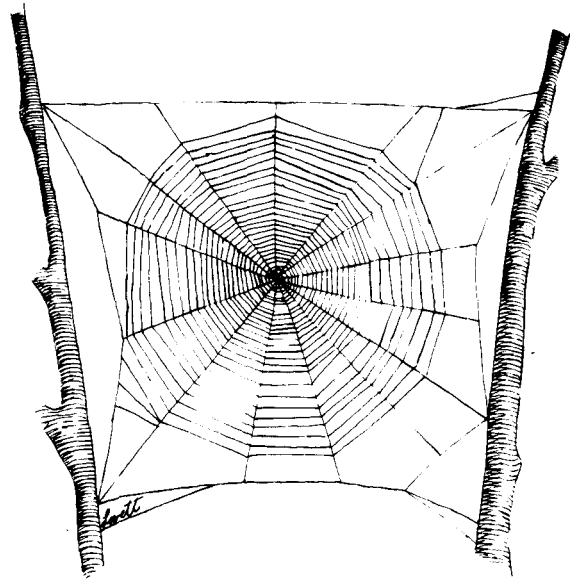


Figure 1 Orb Web

her underside. There may be a few red spots also on top of her abdomen.

## SPIDER BITE EFFECTS

Both the black widow and brown recluse species can be dangerous if they bite. Other species found in Wisconsin may bite small children who handle them, but the cases usually are no more serious than a mosquito bite or a bee sting. However, individuals vary in their sensitivity to insect and spider bites, so call your physician in case of an extreme reaction to a bite.

Brown recluse spider poison affects human blood and body cells. Persons bitten usually experience little immediate pain, but in time the wound becomes dark, enlarges, and the skin begins to slough off. These wounds may take months to heal. If bitten, contact a physician immediately.

The poison of the black widow affects the human nervous system. Persons bitten may experience a variety of symptoms such as dizziness, blurred vision, breathing difficulty, nausea and severe pain around the wound. In such instances, contact a physician immediately.

## HOW TO CONTROL

Outdoors, spider populations generally reach their peak in August, September and early October. However, in basements and some barns, you can find spiders all year. The presence of spiders is often related to availability of food; primarily small insects. Therefore, a treatment which eliminates these insects will also reduce the number of spiders.

General sanitation is the most practical method of con-

trolling spiders. Clear away all webbing with a vacuum cleaner, or an ordinary housecleaning broom, dust mop or cloth. A general spray with a residual insecticide such as chlorpyrifos (Dursban), diazinon (Spectracide), malathion or propoxur (Baygon) will reduce the number of insects and discourage spiders. Persistence in destroying webs and use of a spray in and around the hiding places where spiders frequent should control their numbers.

Spider control in dairy barns is more difficult. Spiders are a nuisance primarily because of unsightly webs. Federal and state regulations govern the use of chemicals in dairy barns and milking parlors, so use only those insecticides permitted in barns for residual fly control to reduce spider numbers. In livestock barns, food processing and storage houses, poultry houses and kennels, use only products specifically approved for use in those places as indicated by the label of the product.

Because spiders rest on webs and spend considerably less time on the surfaces of buildings than flies and other insects do, they may not come in contact with a residual insecticide. Therefore, while a fly control material may reduce the number of flies, it may not be effective on spiders.

#### USE INSECTICIDES SAFELY

1. Check label directions and safety recommendations every time you use insecticides.
2. Keep insecticides in original, labeled containers out of the way of uninformed persons, children and animals.
3. Store where the insecticide cannot be accidentally mistaken for food or cleaning products.
4. Put away or cover carefully all food, dishes and utensils before spraying.
5. Don't smoke, eat or drink when using insecticides.
6. Keep people and animals away from places being treated.
7. Avoid unnecessary exposure when using insecticides.
8. Wash hands and face thoroughly with soap and water after using insecticides.
9. Throw empty containers in the trash. Do not leave them where children or animals can come in contact with them.

NOTE: In case of accidental poisoning from insecticides, call your doctor immediately. Be sure to show him the insecticide label.

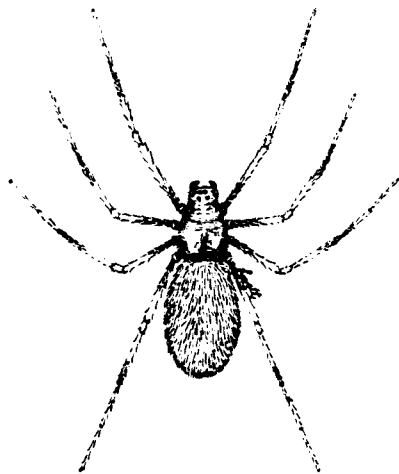


Figure 2 Generalized Spider and Enlarged Head View

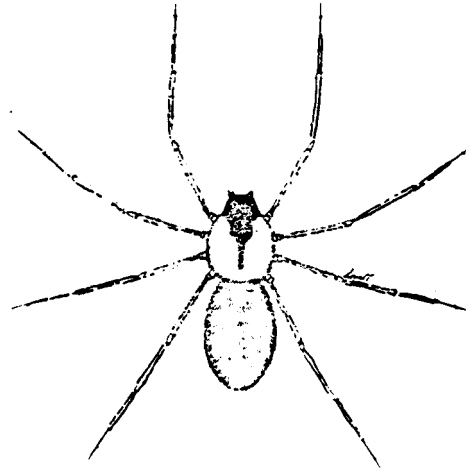


Figure 3 Brown Recluse Spider and Enlarged Head View



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