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Tips to Help Reduce Allergens, and Keep Rodents and Other Creatures from Invading the Home

ST. PAUL, Minn. – June 3, 2010 – Besides your family, what else may be living in your home? Certified Home Inspector and former host of HGTV's *House Detective* Steve Ramos says that many people don't even realize the creatures, organisms and allergens that can lurk in the home.

"Often times, it's not just the family that lives and grows in the home," said Ramos. "Everything from rodents, bats and insects to mold, mildew and bacteria may be quietly inhabiting your space and potentially affecting the health of the family or the structural integrity of the home."

Ramos examines what could be crawling or spreading in your home, and how to best prevent or remove these unwanted trespassers:

- 1. **Remove the Rodents:** Rats can squeeze through an opening the size of a quarter! To help prevent these intruders from ever entering, seal up all exterior openings, as well as openings around kitchen and bathroom piping with steel wool. Rodents tend to inhabit areas that are conducive to their survival, so keep water from accumulating under and around the home, and store any pet food in sealed containers.
- 2. Move Out Mold: Mold requires food, warmth and moisture to grow in the home. Regular dusting can decrease the organic materials that make up most dust particles, thereby reducing the food source for mold. Poor ventilation can also be a culprit by allowing moisture to seep into the home. Check your bath and kitchen fans for proper operation, and ensure that the vents are discharging to the exterior of the home. Finally, reduce condensation in the home and the resulting mold growth by ensuring that the walls, ceilings and floors are properly insulated.
- 3. **Forget Four- and Eight-Legged Friends:** Ants and spiders tend to be travel companions when you have one, you're likely to have the other. The key to helping control spiders is eliminating the ants, since spiders eat them as food. Treating the perimeter of your home with a safe, non-toxic insecticide may help with ant control and force spiders to search of food and reside elsewhere.
- 4. **Beware of Bats:** Bat droppings are toxic, and this can become a big problem when bats decide to take up residence in your attic. To help keep bats from roosting in your home deny them access in the first place by placing screens over the chimney and attic vent openings.
- 5. **Clear Common Allergens:** Allergens such as dust mite debris, pet dander, pollen and mold spores can become airborne throughout the home. While dusting and cleaning can help remove particles from surfaces, you shouldn't forget about removing these allergens from the air. Install a high performance filter, such as a Filtrete Elite Allergen Reduction Filter from 3M to help capture up to 94 percent of these large airborne particles from the air passing through the filter. Be sure to change the filter every three months.

- 6. **Defeat Wood Destroying Insects:** Carpenter ants and termites can gain access to the home through siding and decking, so keep at least six to eight inches of wood clearance near the ground. Since these insects like to chew on wet wood, inspect for and correct any plumbing leaks as needed.
- 7. **So Long Surface Bacteria and Viruses**: Regularly cleaning and sanitizing hard surfaces, such as counters and floors, can help control bacteria and viruses from spreading in the home.
- 8. Look Out for Lead Paint: Lead paint was common in homes that were built before 1980, but can also be found in newly constructed homes. Before conducting any type of remodeling project, it's recommended to have your paint tested for lead, as you don't want anyone, especially small children, ingesting lead paint chips. Also, remediation projects where sanding is involved can create lead dust, so always be sure to use the proper respiratory protection.

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About Steve Ramos

Steve Ramos is the former co-host for Home and Garden Television's (HGTV) *House Detective* and has appeared in more than 100 episodes of the show. In each segment, Steve takes homeowners on a tour of their home and using the latest hi-tech gadgets shows the good, the bad, and the downright ugly. Steve is a Certified Home Inspector, Certified Building Science Thermographer and a Mold Specialist.

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