Common Spiders

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Many people are afraid of spiders. Other people are annoyed by their habit of building webs across doorways, in corners, on furniture and in other places. Though they are unpopular, most spiders are shy and harmless to humans. It's often by accident that they invade the home, especially in late summer and early autumn. Most spiders actually help man by feeding on injurious and troublesome insects.

Identification

Spiders have eight legs, vary in size and color, and lack wings and antennae. They have two body sections. The front section with the head and thorax is the cephalothorax, which is where the eyes, mouthparts and legs are attached. The second region is the abdomen where the digestive organs and the silk-spinning glands are located. Most spiders have eight eyes, some have six or fewer, and a few spiders have no eyes. All spiders have a pair of jaw-like structures (*chelicerae*) that are a hollow, with a claw-like fang through which venom can be ejected. Young spiders (spiderlings) resemble the adults except they are smaller and may be a different color. Males are usually smaller than females.

Life Cycle and Habits

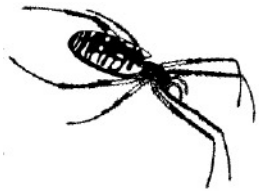
Spiders are predators and often use webs to capture prey. They lay eggs in a silky egg sac that is often round and carried by the female or hidden in webs. Egg sacs may contain up to 100 eggs that can hatch in three weeks and reach adulthood in one year. In some species, one female may produce as many as 3,000 eggs in several egg sacs.

Cobweb or house spiders (Family *Theridiidae*)

These indoor spiders are less than ½ inch long, are not hairy, do not jump and are pale-yellow tan, brown or gray with no distinct markings. Their irregular webs are built in homes, and often become dust covered when abandoned.

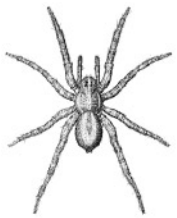
Orb weaver or garden spiders (Family *Araenidae*)

These large spiders, some with oddly shaped abdomens that are black and yellow or black and red, appear outdoors in late summer in orb-like webs. Webs are found in brambles, bushes, tall grasses, etc., where insects fly into the traps. Some species will spin webs across doorways or windows of buildings. Despite their formidable appearance, orb weavers are not dangerous, but can bite man when provoked. One common orb weaver is the banded garden spider (*Argiope trifasciata*). This spider is found in gardens, around houses, and in tall grass. The ground color is pale yellow with black radiating lines on the abdomen. The legs are spotted. The size, without including the legs, varies from 3⁄16 inch in the male to 1 inch in the female.



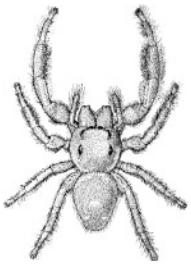
Wolf or ground spiders (Family *Lycosidae*)

These spiders are common outdoors but may wander indoors, primarily to basements. They do not build webs but can run rapidly to catch their prey. Many have a stripe or pattern the length of the first, and sometimes the second, body segment. Wolf spiders are normally dark brown and large. Females carry the egg sac under the abdomen. Some wolf spiders bite if molested.



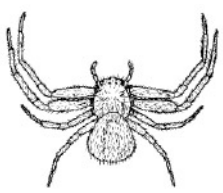
Jumping spiders (Family *Salticidae*)

These spiders live outside but are sometimes found indoors on windows, screens or doors. They are small- to medium-sized with short legs and stout bodies. The body is hairy, black and may have brightly colored, iridescent orange or red spots on the abdomen. Their movements are quick, with short, sudden jumps that can be many times their body length. Some of these spiders can bite humans. The jumping spider most commonly sent in for identification is *Phidippus audax*, because it looks similar to the black widow spider. The jumping spider is black with a white band and several spots on the abdomen. The spots are usually white, but some or all may be yellow or orange, especially in spiderlings. The central spot is the largest. The legs of this spider are shorter than legs of the black widow. A jumping spider will bite, but the small amount of venom causes only mild irritation.



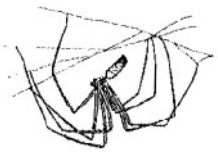
Crab spiders (Family *Thomisidae*)

Species of this family are frequently carried into homes on plants and flowers. The body colors and markings of these spiders vary. The most distinguishing characteristics of this family are the crab-like first two pairs of legs. Female spiders vary in size from 3⁄16 to 3⁄8 inch, and males vary from 1⁄8 to 5⁄8 inch.



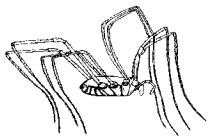
Cellar or daddy-long-legs spiders (Family *Pholcidae*)

These spiders have small bodies with long, slender legs. They are common in barns, cellars and damp warehouses where they hang upside down in a loose web in dark corners.



Harvestmen or daddy-long-legs (Order *Opiliones* – Family *Phalangiidae*)

Although these animals are not considered true spiders, they look similar. They have an oval, compact body with extremely long, slender legs. They may be found in gardens, outdoor buildings and homes. They feed on plant juices, dead insects and some live insects.



Control Measures

Prevention

Sanitation is critical in successful spider control. Remove or destroy spider webs, egg sacs and spiders. Vacuum behind and under furniture and clean storage areas, furnace rooms, and laundry rooms regularly. Be sure to control excess moisture and humidity, keeping basements, crawlspaces and porches as dry as possible. Eliminate other household pests such as flies, ants, crickets and cockroaches, which attract spiders by providing a source of food. Clean up woodpiles, trash, rocks, compost piles, old boards and other debris where spiders live. Be sure to seal or caulk cracks and crevices where spiders can enter the house. Use a hose with high-pressure stream to destroy webs, egg sacs and spiders on the outside walls of the home.

Chemical Control

For indoor treatment, use an aerosol or mist application of pyrethrins plus piperonyl butoxide for quick knockdown. Sprays containing allethrin, bifenthrin, cyfluthrin, carbaryl, cypermethin, deltamethrin, esfenvalerate, permethrin, prallethrin, propoxur, resmetrhin, s-methroprene, tetramethrin and tralomethrin can provide residual control by treating cracks and crevices, along baseboards, around door trim, and on the undersides of furniture and shelves, especially in undisturbed areas where spiders are commonly found. Treatment also may be useful in crawl spaces, porches, garages and attics. For outdoor treatment, apply insecticides to foundations, door and window frames, window wells, under eaves, and under decks. It also may be wise to treat woodpiles, sheds and weedy areas.

Before using any insecticide, read labels carefully. Be sure to select a product labeled for the intended use. Follow label instructions carefully. Contact a pest control professional when infestations are persistent and hard to find. Pest control professionals are licensed and certified to use restricted use insecticides that are not available to homeowners.

See K-State Research and Extension publication MF-771 *Spiders and Scorpions* for information on the black widow spider and the brown recluse spider.

Acknowledgement: Revised from earlier document by Sloderbeck, Mock, Bowling and Brooks. Entomology 322 (L.D.) 1993. Originally adapted from: *Spiders In and Around the Home*, William F. Lyon, The Ohio State University.

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