

WEEKLY NEWS COLUMN

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IS YOUR TOILET PAPER STOCKPILE SAFE??

Admit it...some of you stockpiled toilet paper when this pandemic hit. You were worried you'd be stuck inside, unable to go anywhere and you'd eventually run out. Being that toilet paper is, well, paper, it won't "go bad" like some other necessities, right? Wrong.

There are actually bugs (insects) that feed on toilet paper. According to Raymond Cloyd, K-State Research and Extension Professor of Entomology, "Some insects actually have an affinity for toilet paper that may be related to the 'softness,' which makes it easier for the insects to chew on the toilet paper sheets. One of these insects is the silverfish [Order: Zygentoma (Thysanura)], which is grayish-white, segmented, elongated, and approximately 3/4 inches (19 mm) long. Silverfish have two antennae that move back and forth in motion and there are three long tails or bristles protruding from the back of the abdomen. In addition to silverfish, cockroaches, termites, and booklice may occasionally enjoy munching on toilet paper sheets. Silverfish will start feeding on the outer edges of the toilet paper and move inward." Have you ever seen a silverfish? They aren't pretty.

I bet you keep your stockpile of toilet paper in your basement, too. This is a prime environment for silverfish development and reproduction because they prefer a humid, damp environment. Silverfish reproduce and develop quicker, the higher the humidity. The life cycle of the silverfish- from egg to adult- takes three to four months. When toilet paper is stacked on a shelf next to a wall, you are basically providing a buffet for silverfish.

Dr. Cloyd shares the following in the April 7, 2020 edition of the K-State Research and Extension Horticulture Newsletter to protect your valuable toilet paper stash from silverfish and other "bugs:"

1. Keep all toilet paper in the original packaging.
2. Place toilet paper in PVC tubes similar to the ones used for drainage that will allow you to stack the toilet paper rolls on top of each other. Be sure to seal both ends to exclude silverfish and other "bugs" from getting at the toilet paper.
3. Place toilet paper in a heavy duty plastic garbage container with a tight-sealing lid. In addition, you can place moth balls in the bottom of the container to repel any "bugs."
4. Place toilet paper in heavy duty Tupperware containers with tight-sealing lids. Again, placing moth balls inside may help to repel any "bugs" from munching on the rolls of toilet paper.
5. Place diatomaceous earth (DE) around stacks of toilet paper to create a barrier. However, make sure there are no gaps in the barrier that silverfish or other "bugs" can get through. If a silverfish or even a cockroach tries to cross the DE barrier, their cuticle will be ruptured leading to a loss of water (dehydration)...and they will die!

I hope these tips save you time and money along with your precious toilet paper resource. For more information on horticulture and entomology, contact the Cowley County Extension Office 221-5450, 441-4565.

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