



Prague, 1. 11. 2022

Dear students and residents of Strahov Dormitory,

You may recently have heard in the media that Strahov Dormitory is dealing with an outbreak of common bed bugs. Even the serious media have lowered their reports to a tabloid level when they claim that our dormitory buildings are infested. It is true, however, that since around mid-August we have seen an increased number of reports of bed bugs from those accommodated at Strahov compared to the usual state. During September, there was clear evidence of bed bugs in the dormitory in a few dozen rooms. I would leave each of you to draw your own conclusions as to whether this represents an infestation, considering the total capacity of Strahov Dormitory. I certainly don't want to take this situation lightly, but I strongly reject the claim that while resolving the situation, dormitory management has not been communicating, has been too slow, has not dealt with the problem in time or is skimping in dealing with it. None of this has occurred, and nor will it! I am personally unhappy that we find ourselves in this situation at CTU dormitories, and it is the SFA's absolute priority to resolve the situation. Since the start of September, we have been making huge efforts and spending huge sums of money, and this has resulted in a gradual reduction in the number of reports of bed bugs.

It is neither an easy nor a fast process to exterminate bed bugs. There is basically no procedure which can immediately get rid of bed bugs from places where they occur. This is not an excuse in any way. It is all related to the ability of the common bed bug to live with humans and survive next to them. I shall endeavour to present a few basic facts about bed bugs below: I believe that as students at a technical university you will be able to verify this information and come to your own conclusion as to whether we are taking the right approach.

So how to bed bugs move around, and where did they come from?

The common bed bug lives passively side by side with humans the world over. Typically, people bring bed bugs home in luggage after travelling, via used furniture or in old books. Where they occur, they move around by crawling. Bed bugs move from room to room and from floor to floor (some sources say they can even crawl a number of storeys at night along the outside walls of a building) in order to reproduce or else when they have been without food for a long period of time. Bed bugs can only be found where people sleep.

Why do bed bugs occur in human homes?

Because the common bed bug is an exclusively human parasite which lives from human blood.

For this reason, the presence of bed bugs is not directly related to poor hygiene or mess. It is very difficult to spot bed bugs in a room during the day: they stay out of the light and remain hidden during the day. They only come out at night to look for a host and a suitable place to bite them. When they latch on, they inject an anaesthetic into the host's bloodstream so they don't wake up and suck their blood for a few minutes. Once full, they go back into hiding for 8 to 10 days, where they digest the blood, reproduce and lay eggs. The incubation period for their eggs is 8 to 11 days under standard conditions. The entire bed bug reproduction cycle from egg to egg takes around a month. Considering the bug's small size and flat body, bed bugs make use of tiny gaps and cavities in your room to hide. They are typically found in the seams of mattresses, behind the upholstery, behind wooden bedframes, below windowsills, inside electric wiring guides, etc. I think that the common bed bug has two extraordinary abilities which make their extermination extremely difficult. First of all, bed bugs are able to recognise when the host is sleeping from their hiding place: if nobody is sleeping in the room they won't come out of their hiding place. Secondly, if there is no host available for the bed bug, it is able to hibernate in its hiding place for a number of months. And in such cases, the incubation period of its eggs is extended to up to one year. On the other hand, it is good news that practically all sources agree that there is no evidence of diseases ever being transmitted from bed bug to humans. Thus, bed bugs are not a serious health risk for humans. Their bites are annoying, however, depending on how sensitive you are to them. It is said that around 30% of the population does not have any skin reaction to a bite. As a result, some people may not notice that they have bed bugs in their room. It is practically impossible to get rid of bed bugs without external help.

So how are we dealing with the bed bugs?

A specialist company is spraying a substance which kills bed bugs in every room where there is a report of possible bed bug occurrence (even if unverified: traces of bed bugs are not always visible in rooms). This spray is applied on basically every surface, including furniture, and once it dries it works for up to 12 weeks. Before the spray is applied, the room must be prepared, with all items removed from wardrobes and cupboards, the bed and wardrobes moved away from the walls, and ideally all shelves and rails removed. At Strahov, residents should move their items to the corridor. The risk of bed bugs escaping during this time is minimal. Once the substance applied has dried, the room is dry-cleaned using a vacuum cleaner, and the resident can subsequently move back in. This entire process takes around 2.5 hours. The room should not be cleaned using water once this treatment has been applied. The product used incorporates two ingredients, with one killing bed bugs immediately after application, and the second creating a protective environment preventing any bugs from later moving in or hatching. Any bed bugs become poisoned through their legs when they crawl on treated surfaces. Only around 1/8 of all bed bugs in any particular room come out each night, and as well as live bed bugs there are also eggs waiting to be hatched hidden in the room. This is why bed bugs cannot be exterminated in a single step. One advantage is that after being poisoned by the product, bed bugs lose the desire to feed and the ability to reproduce. They often also lose their sensitivity to light, so if any resident encounters a live bed bug in their room during the day after it has been sprayed, this means that the treatment is working. In order that the described process can be effective, the room must remain lived in after the

pest control company has applied the spray. This will ensure that there is a large chance that the bed bugs in the room will be successfully exterminated. Pest control interventions made in early September have shown an effectiveness of approx. 97 %. Only 3 % of rooms treated required a second application. We have consulted Prague Public Health Office regarding our approach, which is also monitoring the situation at Strahov.

What should residents do?

If you think that there are bed bugs in your room, i.e. you have seen live bed bugs, evidence of their presence, or you have any bites on your body, then immediately contact the dormitory economic manager. You can do this by phone. All economic managers at Strahov now have mobile phones. Your economic manager will provide you with detailed instructions of what to do, and will immediately arrange a treatment for your room by pest control, who will visit you within a couple of working days at a prior agreed time. If you are still bothered by the presence of bed bugs in your room five to six weeks after treatment application, the whole process must be done again. Any personal items which can be washed should be washed at a temperature of at least 60 degrees. Any personal items you cannot wash can be put in freezer compartments. These can both be done at Strahov free of charge.

I fully understand those of you who do not want to or are unable to remain in your room under these conditions. You are free to terminate your accommodation contract here because of the presence of bed bugs without any sanctions being imposed on you. Unfortunately, after the start of the academic year we have very limited options in terms of being able to re-house you somewhere else.

As Director of SFA CTU, I apologise to all affected residents for all the inconvenience and discomfort caused. I would also ask everybody to be patient and especially to co-operate with us. Please continue to reside in your room if at all possible after it has been treated. I trust that the information above will help you to understand how difficult it is to eliminate bed bugs, and without your help and mutual co-operation our chances of doing so are reduced. I can assure you that here at SFA CTU we are doing the maximum possible.

Finally, I would like to invite you to a meeting at the Strahov canteen restaurant on 21 November 2022 at 6:00 pm. At this meeting, we shall look at the current situation at Strahov Dormitory through moderated discussion.

Thank you.

Bc. Michal Vodička
Director of SFA CTU