



ENTFACT-420

SPRINGTAILS

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Springtails are tiny wingless insects with distinctive heads and a hump-backed appearance. Their name comes from a forked structure attached to the underside of the abdomen. It acts a spring to flip them into the air, giving them the appearance of tiny fleas. Other than being a nuisance, these unique little creatures pose no threat.

Most springtails live in rich soil or leaf litter, under bark or decaying wood, or associated with fungi. Many are scavengers, feeding on decaying plants, fungi, molds, or algae. Springtails become abundant among wet leaves, soil, and plant material along a house foundations or sidewalks where they can be a temporary annoyance. One white species lives on the surface of ponds and streams can be found in drinking water from cisterns or wells. They also can occur around floor drains, in damp basements, and crawl spaces. Masses of these insects can be swept up and discarded.

Plants grown in homes and greenhouses sometimes become infested as a result of heavy breeding in the moist soil. Allowing the soil to dry out will usually eliminate them. Some species, such as the garden springtail can be found on field crops and vegetables, but they rarely cause enough damage to warrant control measures.

Most common springtails do not survive in dry conditions. Any steps to improve ventilation and promote drying are the best long term solutions. Removal of accumulations of wet leaves or other organic matter will eliminate breeding sites. Aerosol household insecticides can be used to treat infestations but will provide only temporary relief if the favorable conditions are not corrected.