

## Crickets foretell temperature while fiddling

NEWARK, Del. — Crickets - nature's fiddlers - produce their shrill music by rubbing their wings together, explains University of Delaware extension entomologist Frank E. Boys. When the Common field cricket wants to make his call, he raises his wings to an approximate 45-degree angle from his body. A file on one wing rasps against a scraper on the other, creating a sound that is pleasing to some people and irritating to others.

During this fiddling process, called stridulation, the insect controls the volume and direction of the sound by position of the wings in relation to the body. For example, to make the muted, muffled notes that give the illusion of distance, the wings are lowered close to the back. Only adult male crickets chirp or fiddle, but females, with ears in their knees, listen. Wingless baby crickets are seen and not heard.

Entomologists have found

that the various cricket calls have meanings. Some are love songs, others announce danger, still others are the equivalent of "Here I am, Mable!"

Did you know that the temperature can accurately be told from the song of the snowy tree cricket? This outdoor species is often seen on the trunks of trees and is abundant in Delaware. Just count the number of chirps in 15 seconds, add 40, and you have the number of degrees Fahrenheit with surprising accuracy. In general, crickets do not chirp at all when it is colder than 55 degrees or at temperatures higher than 100 degrees.

They overwinter as eggs in the ground, and are present outside until the first hard frost. Field crickets are not adapted for indoor living but will invade homes when outdoor populations are high, or when food is scarce.

House crickets generally are found in garbage or refuse dumps, and often

invade houses near these areas. They will feed on almost any organic refuse. They stay active the year round and may overwinter as adults in buildings.

Both house and field crickets can damage woollens, silks, cottons, and other fabrics. They feed on a wide variety of organic materials. Large numbers of field and house crickets may do severe damage in one night.

Sanitation will definitely aid in the control of crickets;

such things as trash removal and the disposal of vegetation around foundations will discourage the introduction of this pest. It is also helpful to repair loose-fitting doors and windows and cracks in the foundation. In non-food preparing areas residual sprays may be applied to baseboards, in closets, under stairways, and around fireplaces. Treating around the outside foundation with a residual spray is an excellent way to prevent entry.

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YORK - Delco Shopping Mall (Carlisle Road and Route 74) Thursday, October 19, from 12 noon to 1:30 p.m.

Of the 2000 known species of crickets, the two that concern Delawareans the most are the common field cricket and the house cricket. The field cricket is usually dark brown to black, but occasionally light-brown specimens are seen. Field crickets fly and jump well. The house cricket is straw-colored, with three dark bands on the head.

Field crickets generally live in grassy areas, including lawns and fence rows, feeding on plant material. They are active at

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