

SMALL BUG, BIG PROBLEM

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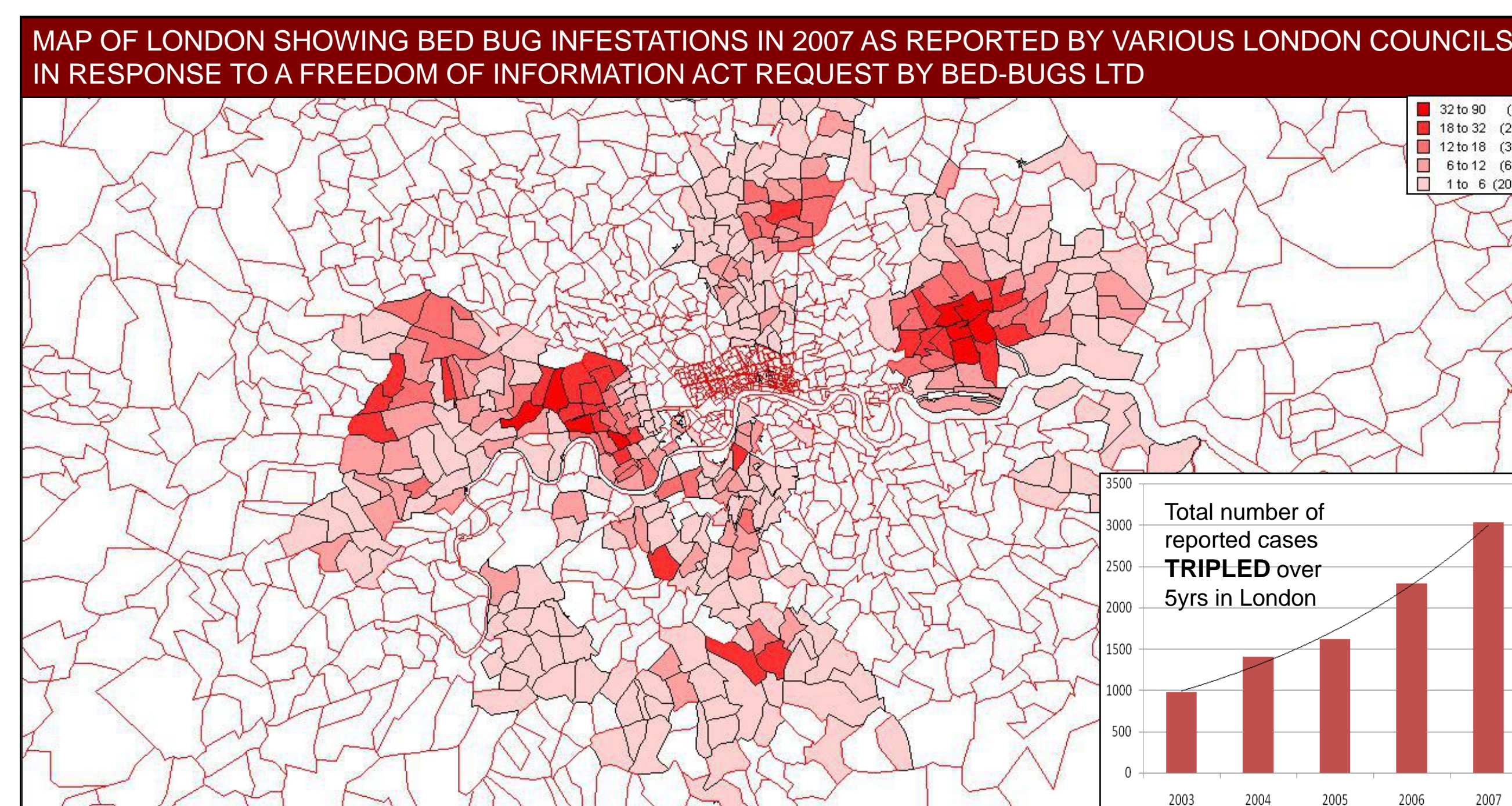
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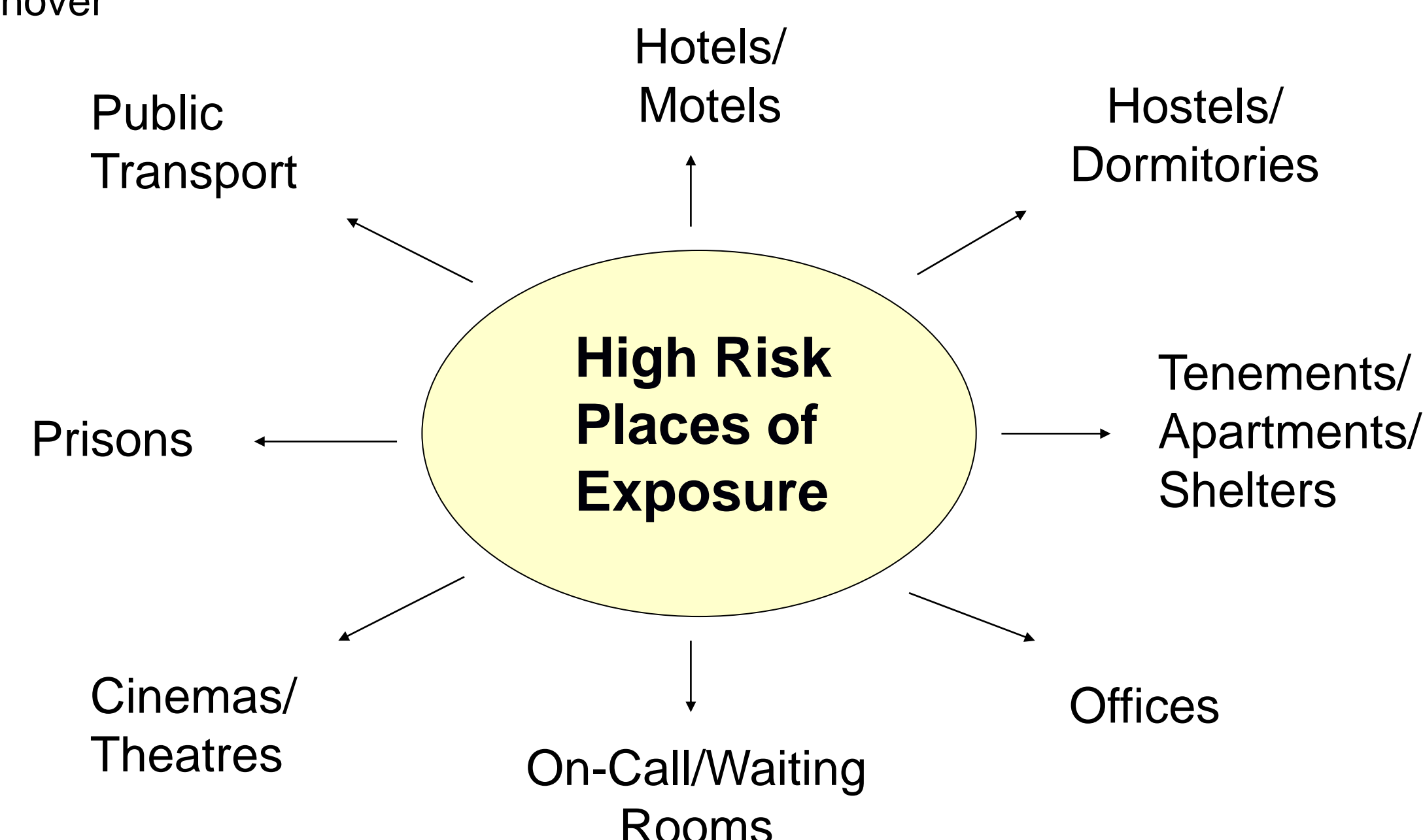
Background

- Bed bugs were common in the UK prior to World War II, after which time widespread use of synthetic insecticides e.g. DDT greatly reduced their numbers
- At one stage in the 1930's, 30% of all homes in the UK were infested
- They have become a common pest again in UK
- Patients bitten by bed bugs could visit their GP and may be misdiagnosed, thus being left to suffer with troubling symptoms for a longer period of time



Mode of Transmission

- These exposure pests spread from any area where people spend enough time for the bedbugs to infest clothing or luggage
- They don't transmit disease but can have a detrimental effect on people's health
- Bed bugs are most frequently found in dwellings with a high rate of occupant turnover

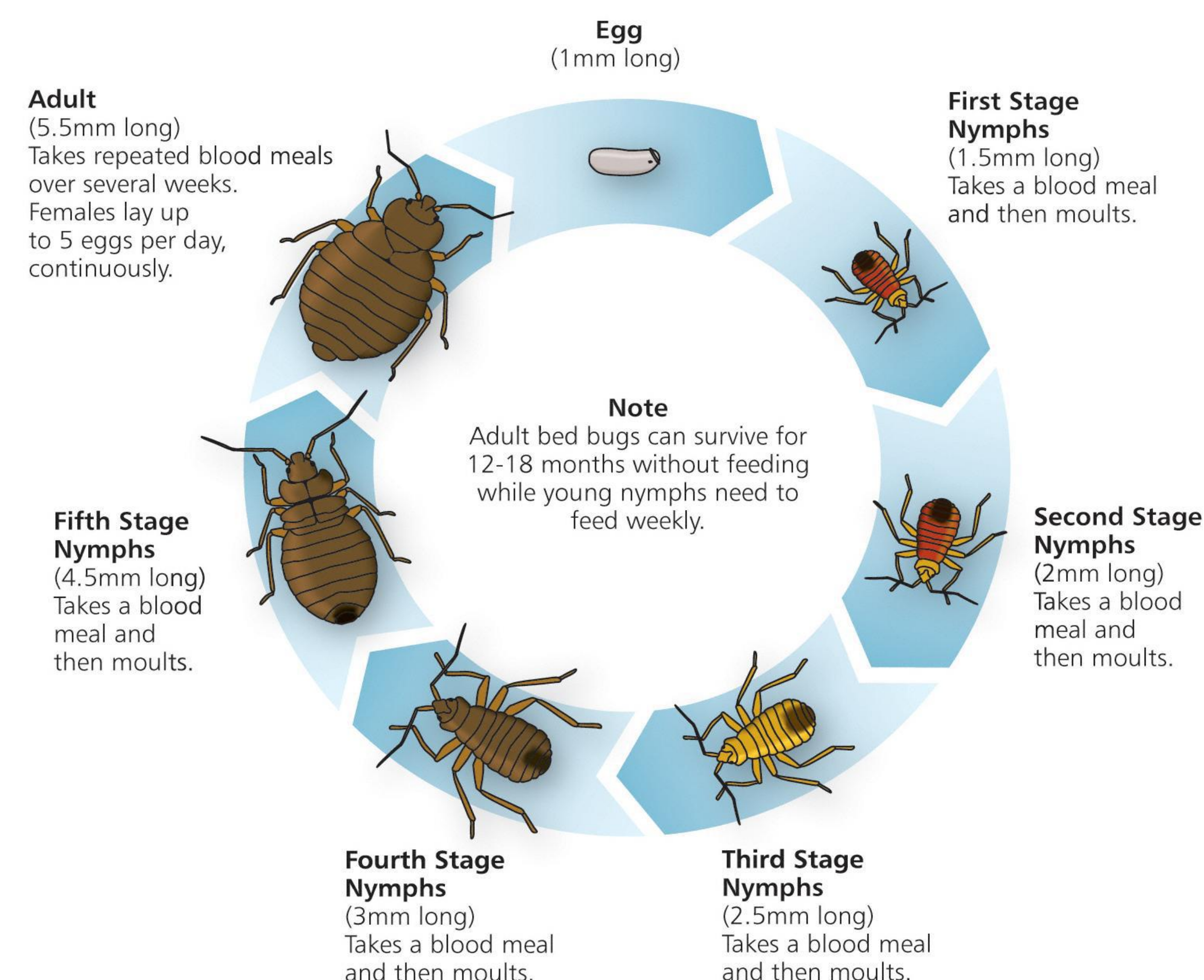


•Such infestations usually are not a reflection of poor hygiene or bad housekeeping but that a previous occupant had come into contact with them at some stage

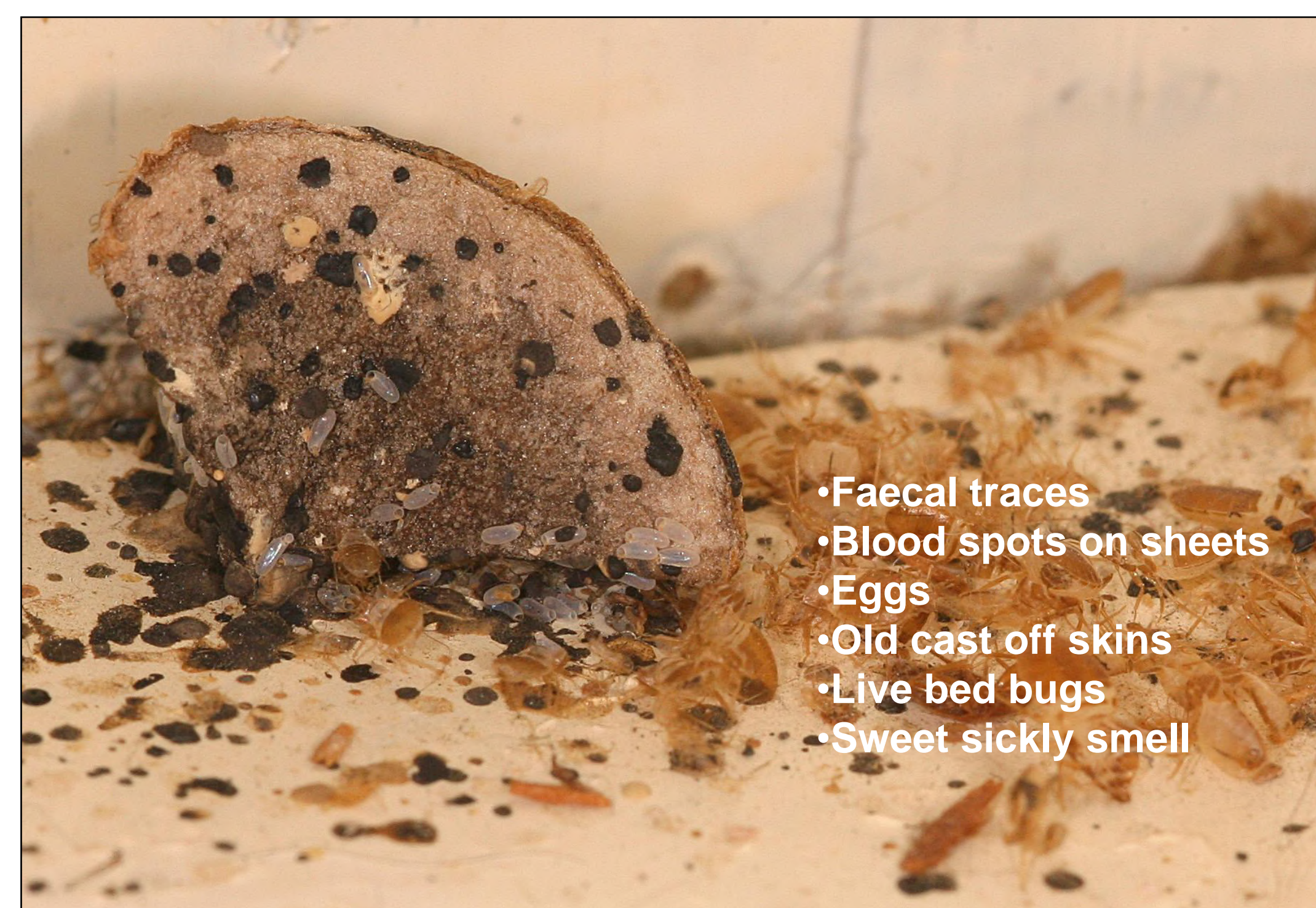
MORE PEOPLE = MORE EXPOSURE EVENTS

Life Cycle of the Bed Bug

Cimex lectularius



Physical signs of infestation



BED BUGS ARE BACK

First Indications

- For most people - a bite, a non specific sign
- Impossible to tell from the appearance of the bite what caused it
- Other symptoms include itching and in extremis anaemia and lethargy



Variation in degree of symptoms - some itch to bullous eruptions

By the time bedbugs have been confirmed, the infestation will likely be larger and more difficult to manage

Treatment & Prevention

•Many individuals are treated for presumed scabies or prescribed long courses of multiple medications e.g. high dose topical corticosteroids, oral antibiotics and antihistamines and subjected to potential drug side effects

1. RELIEF OF CLINICAL SYMPTOMS

- Mild antihistamines and creams containing crotamiton for the bites
- Protect bites from atmosphere

2. CHECK FOR MEDICAL CAUSE OF CLINICAL SYMPTOMS

3. ADVICE TO CHECK HOMES AND WORK PLACES FOR PHYSICAL SIGNS OF BED BUGS

- If signs present, contact a pest controller to make an assessment

4. PREVENTION

- Educating people about bed bugs
- Regular cleaning of homes helps to detect signs of bed bug infestations earlier

Conclusion

•GPs can help identify cases sooner by considering bedbugs in their differential diagnosis in any patient that presents with bites or itching

•A greater understanding of bedbugs and their mode of transmission, high risk places of exposure, physical signs of infestation, symptoms, treatment and prevention strategies is needed for **GPs to make the correct diagnosis, avoid ineffective and unnecessary treatment, and advise patients to deal with the cause and avoid re-infestations**

Acknowledgements

Photographs by Richard Naylor, Entomology Dept, University of Sheffield