

*Providing Leadership in Environmental Entomology*

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## SPRINGTAILS

**Description and Habits.** Springtails are tiny, jumping, soft-bodied insects that live in very moist conditions. They are usually between 0.04 and 0.08 inch, and white, yellowish with black markings or dark gray. These insects have a "spring-tail" that enables them to hop when they are disturbed. Most are scavengers, feeding on algae, fungi, spores, pollen and decaying vegetable matter. Some springtails feed on dead animals. Unlike most insects, many springtails can tolerate fairly cold conditions. Some can even live on snow. They can occur in very large numbers around moist/organic areas. Springtails may even be a problem in swimming pool drains. Large numbers of jumping springtails can be a serious nuisance.



Springtails are not known to transmit any diseases to humans. They do not damage buildings and they do not bite. On rare occasions, if handled, they have been known to cause dermatitis.

**Nonchemical Control** Large numbers of springtails indicates excess moisture due to a water leak, excessive watering of plants or high humidity. Finding ways to dry areas where springtails are found should eliminate problems within a few days. Correcting moisture problems may involve finding and fixing water leaks, removing wet wood, reducing mulch, removing moldy items, allowing potted plants to dry-out before re-watering, reducing organic materials at the site and increasing air circulation.

**Chemical Control.** In rare cases, chemical control of springtails may be necessary. Insecticide sprays directed around the perimeter of buildings where springtails are a problem can be effective. However, insecticides breakdown quickly in moist environments and provide only temporary control unless the environment is altered as described above.

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