



Welcome to the first issue of “What’s Bugging You”, a column covering the common pest problems and questions of Tehama County.

Another way to tell a recluse from other spiders is its peculiar eye pattern. It has 3 pairs of eyes (very unusual). Most spiders have 8 eyes.

Spiders

One of the most common questions we get at the Ag office is “Do we have **brown recluse** spiders here?” The short answer is NO. The brown recluse is a spider of the southwest and Midwestern states. Although it doesn’t naturally occur here it is possible that one could hitch a ride occasionally from out of state. Here’s what it looks like:



Other Poisonous Spiders

The only poisonous spider in our area is the **black widow** spider. Many people are familiar with the female’s typical bulbous abdomen, black color, and red or orange hour-glass shaped marking on the underside:

As you can see, it can be a good sized spider. The characteristic violin-shaped marking on the back is the most familiar trait people look for. There are look-alike spiders in our area that often fool people. For instance:



Male black widows are variously marked with spots and bars, and have a flatter abdomen:



This is the Hololena spider. It’s common in our area, and is part of the funnel web weaver family. You can see that’s not quite a violin on its back.

And they are much smaller – that’s probably why their bites are less harmful.



Immature black widow females have the bulbous shape, and spots and bars. The hourglass is there but light-colored.



Black widows like to build their webs (which are shapeless but very tough) in sheds, barns, around the foundations of houses, in holes and woodpiles, etc.

Spider Bites

Many people are sure the brown recluse lives here because they get a nasty bite or sore and think it must be brown recluse. Even doctors sometimes think this, but again, arachnologists (spider biologists) state conclusively that we DO NOT have brown recluse in this area.

Here is a link to brown recluse spider bite photos. (Disclaimer; these photos are pretty horrific and not for every viewer.)

www.brown-recluse.com/bitephotos.html

Note: Other conditions such as Staph infections, herpes, flesh-eating bacteria can be misdiagnosed as spider bites. Also, people can sometimes react badly to the bites of other spiders or insects. However, if you look at the pictures of true brown recluse bites you will see that they are much more drastic than anything that happens here.

Symptoms: Brown recluse venom causes tissue death; a large area may die and fall out. Black widow venom is a nerve toxin. It causes flu-like symptoms and cramping. Black widow bites are rarely fatal except for small children, the elderly and others with weakened systems.

Interesting Local Spiders

The **Wolf Spider:**



These spiders are very large and carry their babies on their backs. Their eyes reflect light.

The **Huntsman:**



People find these in the house sometimes – scary, but harmless.

The **Sun Spider:**



Related to spiders. Non-venomous bite.

The **False Black Widow:**



Non-native, a new arrival in California. Has mild venom, not poisonous. No hour-glass.