

GUARD AGAINST VARMENTS, INSECTS & PESTS COMING ABOARD YOUR BOAT

If you are a long range cruiser or “long term guests” at a marina, the last thing you need are stowaways aboard your boat, particularly those of the rodent family, various insects and other unwanted pests who could invade your boat. They are many to be sure, depending on where you are cruising at the time.

Birds have been known to make nests in air intake vents and hoses. Ducks like to build nests on swim platforms and other nooks and crannies. Mice and even rats have invaded many a vessel and made them their homes. Ants use dock lines and power cords as highways to move aboard. Spiders just love living aboard boats, particularly under sheds and other shaded places. Then there are flies, wasps, bees and other flying bugs. As if that were not enough, there are varmints such as Boll Weevils and Cockroaches who also thrive on the warm, moist, marine environment.

Obviously the first defense is to keep your boat clean, inside and out. But, sometimes that simply is not enough! Extra precautions must be taken if one lives aboard and enjoys long range cruising such as the America’s Great Loop Cruise. Make it a practice to not bring any cardboard or paper products aboard your boat. Take everything out of the cardboard boxes and store them in plastic (Tupperware) containers. That means cereal, crackers, pasta, etc. Cardboard containers often contain boll weevil and cockroach eggs, etc. Rinse sugary soda and beverage containers, bottles, jars and cans as soon as possible, keep trash in plastic bags and container lids closed until you can properly dispose of your trash and/or recyclables.

Vent and scupper openings should be protected by backing them up with fine 1/4 or 1/2 inch chicken wire or heavy gauge screening to prevent birds from building nests in vent hoses or the bilge.

Rodents typically climb aboard on dock lines. One trick we’ve seen is to cut the top of a gallon plastic jug about 3 inches from the cap end. Run the dock line through the cap opening with the large open end towards the dock. Use a strip of tape to hold the jug secure to the line at the cap end.

While many are “anti-chemicals” of any kind -- some of these compounds may be absolutely necessary for survival and comfort. Buy and keep in a safe place aboard various insect sprays and traps to control ants, spiders, roaches, boll weevils, flies, mosquitos, etc. One product we have found which does a great job of controlling spiders inside the boat is Hot Shot® pest strips (formerly sold as the yellow Shell® pest strips). Hang one or two up in your cabin to kill and control spiders - they are non toxic. Place a few ant and roach traps where they may enter your boat and in the galley area. Spraying the dock lines and electrical cords with a pesticide will keep ants, spiders and other critters away from your boat. When using any chemical, read the directions carefully and heed the cautionary statements, particularly any toxicity to pets and children.

A couple of good fly swatters and a bug vacuum or small Dust Buster® type battery vacuum are great tools to have aboard if you must do physical combat and clean up the dead enemies.

While not exactly in the category of varments, insects and pests but also something very important to guard against, is what can get sucked up in your sea cocks and strainers. In addition to weeds and sponge grass, sea nettles (white translucent jelly fish) can cause quite a problem. It is a good idea to check your strainers regularly and clean out any debris. If you do get sea nettles in your strainers, use rubber gloves when cleaning and have a bottle of ammonia and/or Adolph's® meat tenderizer on hand to cure their nasty sting.

The important thing is to have the ammunition you need, when you need it! If you are cruising most days, finding a marina which has a courtesy vehicle and a nearby grocery or hardware store may not be that easy to come by or convenient.

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Two J's V, a 36 ft. Carver Mariner
AGLCA Loopers