



Treatment for Insect Infestations

BY George Ferko, Shawn Lamparter, and Joe Waskovich

INSECT DAMAGE TO TAXIDERMISTRY IS ONE OF THE most alarming subjects facing taxidermists today. Sportsmen are spending more than ever for high quality and artful taxidermy, and protecting them from insect infestation and damage is more important than ever.

Arsenic and Edolan U were both very effective but highly toxic forms of insect prevention. These materials were very strong tools used in the taxidermy industry for years, but due to changes in regulations we no longer have them available for use in taxidermy. Of course, the need for prevention is still with us, but taxidermists and owners of mounted wildlife have few choices to protect their trophies. The difference now are the products from Mount Medix and the suggested approach to “bug proof” and protect mounts. All areas of taxidermy, regardless of taxidermy techniques employed, are susceptible to insect infestation and subsequent damage.

The following article is a description of how to deal with the eventuality of insect infestation in bird taxidermy. This article will also introduce some products and their uses that can be used in all areas of taxidermy to prevent insect infestation and the resulting damage.

Treating Insect Infestation in Bird Taxidermy. It has become commonplace to basically ignore insect threat until infestation occurs and damage is notable. This is mostly because many, if not all, of the preven-

tional methods currently available are marginally effective, if at all. Controlling insect damage in the taxidermy industry starts with serious prevention effort. Since we no longer have materials with high toxicity available, we can expect to put forth a bit more effort to accomplish the same preventative results. Taxidermists and their clients must be vigilant with the routine inspection and cleaning of taxidermy so the presence of insects can be addressed prior to irreparable damage occurring.

This article will present a method to treat insect infestation in modern taxidermy. It will also discuss prevention in bird and mammal taxidermy and provide a description of some new, specially designed taxidermy products on the market to address the prevention and extermination of insect infestation in taxidermy.

The method detailed in the following article uses upland game birds as examples, but can be used for other common birds including waterfowl. Generally, waterfowl are more easily treated since feather matting is not as prevalent. The method we have developed is comprised of five steps: 1) assessing damage, 2) cleaning, 3) treating, 4) drying, and 5) protecting.

1. This method is most easily performed on a bird that is inverted, like this grouse, or in any position with the head pointing down. By inverting the bird you will have easy access to the hard to reach areas and the treatment can be more easily applied between the feathers. For birds



that are in early stages of infestation and little to no visible damage, more robust cleaning, treatment, and drying methods can be employed.
Step One: Assess the degree of infestation

2ab. This infested capercaillie is one of the birds I will use to demonstrate the treatment process. From the outside it shows little visible dam-



age, but the second photo shows you some of the insects and evidence we found after inspecting and cleaning.

The first step is to assess the subject and evaluate the level of infestation and damage caused by the infesting insects.

If there are a lot of feathers that have been clipped, removing these loose feathers may result in large bare spots. These may be reserved for reattachment after the treatment is completed if you determine this is necessary. The mounted birds being used to demonstrate treatment in this article were infested and some had damage, but they were not considered lost trophies. They were cleaned and treated and given more life in the trophy rooms of their owners.

Step Two: Cleaning

3. Being thorough in the initial cleaning will be beneficial in making future assessments much easier as any of the debris left behind by the insects could be considered new during a later inspection and a sign that insect damage is reoccurring. It is very important to access hard to reach areas under feet and wings, in tail attachment areas, and neck and beak



areas. It may be necessary to flex the wing wires a bit to get into this area.

If any insects are found, larvae, dead adults, eggs, fecal material, and other debris should be removed. If a large number of insects are found, it may later be necessary to repeat various steps of this procedure to ensure adequate insect kill.

This photo shows eggs from moths located under the wings of a bird. They would soon hatch and the larvae would be feeding on the feathers of the bird. Be cautious to gently lift feathers in groups to create enough separation to work and search between them. Manual removal of debris is preferred, but low-pressure air or a small vacuum can be carefully used. After a thorough cleaning has been performed and the extent and locations of infestation has been assessed, the bird is ready for treatment.



Step Three: Treating the Bird

4. The treatment will involve the systematic application of an exterminating pesticide with a syringe and needle. During the development of this method, we used

Mount Saver by Mount Medix LLC. Mount Saver is unique in that it will kill the insects in all phases of the life cycle including eggs. Most other exterminating agents, including those used by professional exterminators, will not reliably kill



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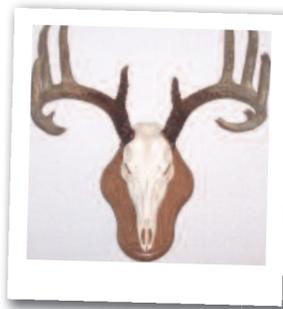
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the eggs. Mount Saver also will not mat down the fine feathers or leave a tacky residue.

5. To treat upland birds, Mount Saver is applied with a hypodermic needle by pushing the needle through the feathers down to the surface of the skin (dermis).



6a. Mount Saver is then applied to the skin in small amounts that can be absorbed by the skin and the areas around the application site. It is easier to start at the feet and work around the legs in a systematic fashion, being sure to thoroughly treat all areas. In the photo above an adult moth can be seen trying to escape. Move to the tail area and apply the Mount Saver in an

1-inch grid to the entire underside of the bird, working from the tail to the head area. If excess solution is applied to the inverted bird, it will run around the bird on the skin and reach the dorsal area. When working from tail to head, any excess Mount Saver solution should begin to drip out off the bird.



7. After treating the entire breast and neck area, the bird should be moved to a position where the beak is the lowest point of the bird. Again, start at the tail and inject Mount Saver in a 1-inch grid, covering the entire dorsal area working toward the head. Using this method of injecting the Mount Medix onto the bird, about 4 to 5 ounces of the product

should be used on a pheasant size bird, and 10 to 12 ounces on a turkey. In the treatment of the pictured capercaillie, about 8 ounces of Mount Saver were used.

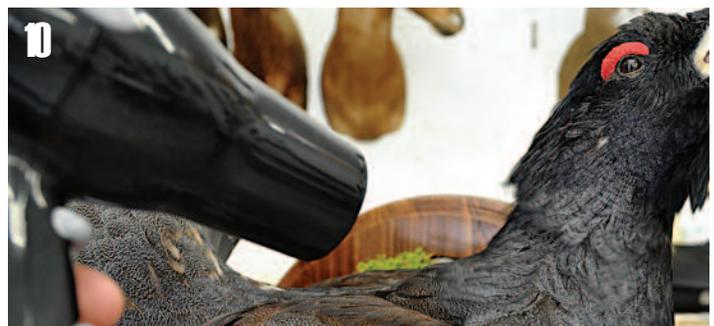
8. After thoroughly wetting the skin, some of the feathers will be very wet and matted down. This should be expected and has not proven to be



a problem. The bird is then sealed in a plastic bag for a 24- to 48-hour soak. During this time the vapors from the product will penetrate all areas of the bird and provide thorough extermination.



9. After the soak is completed, the bag is removed and should be inspected. It is not unusual to see dead larvae and adult insects in the bag and on the surfaces of the bird. It is normal for some excess Mount Saver to be in the bag.



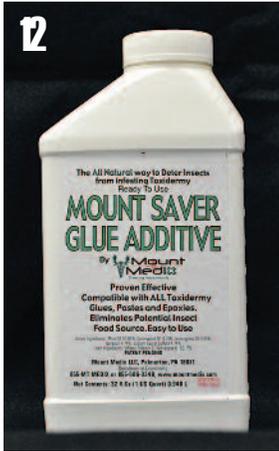
10. The drying and restoring steps can now begin. Any excess Mount Saver should be removed with a soft cloth, wiping in the direction of the feathers. After wiping, use a standard blow dryer to complete the drying process. The hot air will vaporize any residual product on the surface of the feathers and return them to a natural shape and condition. Using the blow dryer in a back a forth motion will help to separate the feather rays. The blow dryer will not completely dry the skin nor remove the Mount Saver from the skin because residue will have absorbed into the skin and will remain after drying. This embedded material will provide some added protection and killing action if any eggs or larvae remain in hard to reach areas. Note: It is not unusual to see dead or dying larvae on the outside

of the bird in the days following treatment when significant infestation has been present.

After the feathers have been dried, they should be preened back into place and the bird left to air-dry for about a week. After the drying has finished, a thorough inspection of the bird should be performed. Any sign of insect activity such as insect trails, silk trails, fecal matter, etc., is an indication that the treatment and dry steps should be repeated. The need to repeat these steps is rare, but may be necessary when infestation is severe or when the application is not complete in hard to reach areas of the bird.

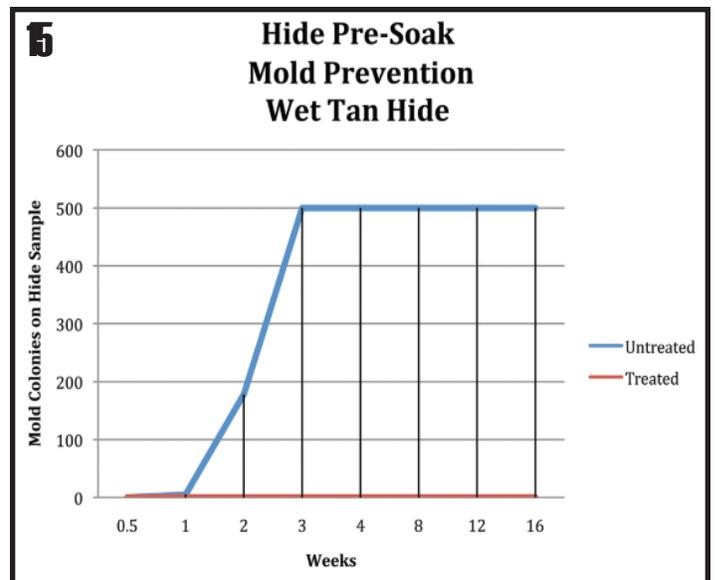
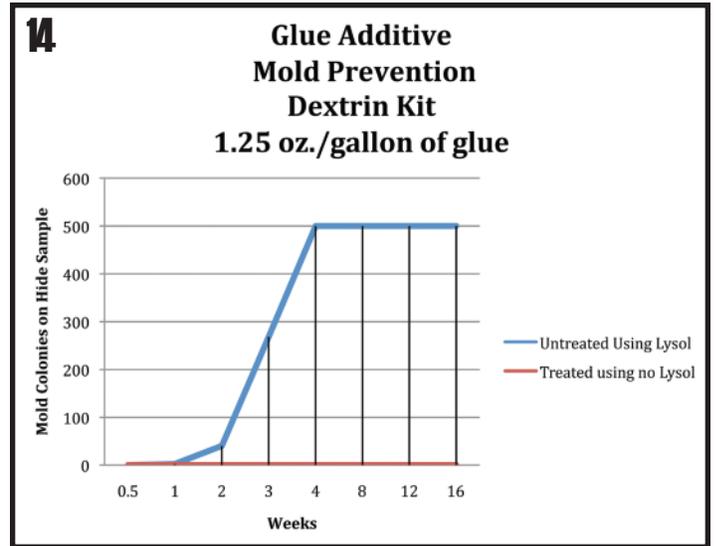
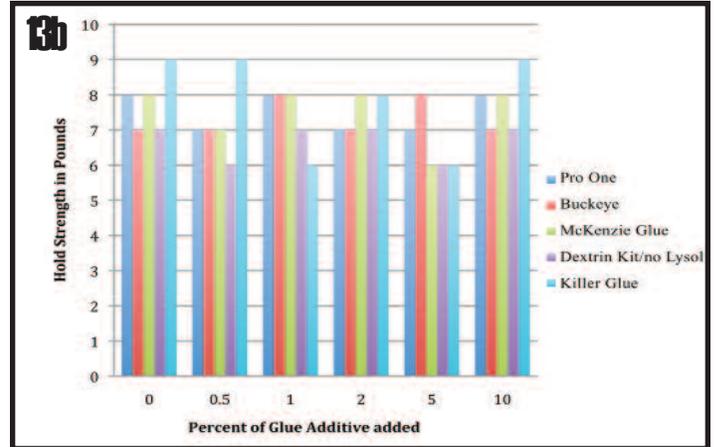


11. Now apply a light mist of Mount Protector to the bird as a finishing or long-term protection step. This product will restore the natural sheen to the bird and further enhance the protection against future insect infestation. It contains agents to help the bird shed dust and dirt. Mount Protector is a prevention product that can be used on all types of taxidermy, with the exception of fish. This product is used periodically to further ensure and prevent future infestation.



Prevention Methods for Mammal and Bird Taxidermy

After dealing with infestation and ridding the mounts of insects, the real focus needs to turn to prevention, which is accomplished by diligence and periodic use of prevention products such as Mount Protector. Mount Protector can be used as part of a three-part prevention method that employs the use of a glue additive, hide pre-soak, and finishing with an application of Mount Protector before delivery to the client. The details of the prevention



method are very easy and yet extremely effective preventing insect infestation or damage.

12. Start with mixing a small amount of the glue additive to whatever glue or hide paste is being used. This encapsulates the killing agents in the glue and creates a time-release mechanism for warding off insects.

13. Detailed studies have been performed to confirm compatibility with commonly available glues such as dextrin dry kits, McKenzie Paste,

Pro One Hide Paste, Buckeye Supreme Hide Paste, and Killer glue. This photo shows samples



of hides glued to a manikin with the various glues that have Mount Saver Glue Additive mixed in them. The additive had no effect on adherence and will not change the individual properties of the glues, like dry time and hold power.



14. The glue additive has also been found to prevent mold in starch and dextrin-based glue for over two years. This is particularly important for taxidermists performing low volumes of work and not wanting to use moldy glue.

15. The next step in the prevention method is using Mount Saver Hide Pre-Soak. The hide pre-soak is used in the wash in the case of wet-tan or rehydration where dry-tan has been used. The pre-soak is simply added to the solution used in this step of normal processing. The killing agent will be readily absorbed on all hide surfaces and actually penetrate into the hide, providing additional time-release protection.

16. In addition to the above products there are two specialized prevention products that are offered by Mount Medix LLC. These products are Mount Saver Dry Preserve and Mount Saver Hoof and Horn. Mount Saver Dry Preserve is a powder formula that contains the same killing agents that are used in the infestation treatment and has many different application possibilities.

Not only can it be used in place of borax as a skin conditioner for bird taxidermy, but it can also be added to tumblers, applied to the cavities inside horns, and incorporated into rock mixes or other habitat materials. The application of the powder will provide a time-release mechanism for the Mount Saver and help to protect birds from infestation. The use of the Dry Preserve and the Hide Pre-Soak, coupled with periodic use of the Mount Protector, can prevent

bug damage for an indefinite period. Mount Medix LLC does recommend a periodic application of the Mount Protector during a six-month cleaning to ensure damage prevention.

Mount Saver Hoof and Horn is a formula that can be injected into hard to reach tissue areas. This product is design to penetrate residual tissue and make it unpalatable to infesting insects. This is especially important for horned species when horns cannot be removed. Hoof and Horn is also used to treat the hoof areas of infested mounts.

In all cases the mounts are misted with Mount Protector when the taxidermy work is completed. This will apply a final layer of protection and make future cleaning very easy since the formula is designed to shed dust.

17. In closing, the days of the taxidermy industry being able to provide a carefree mount for a life-time are almost certainly over. With the use of specially designed products like the ones offered

by Mount Medix LLC, along with vigilance by our clients, catastrophic loss of taxidermy can be avoided. ■

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