



The White-tailed Spider

(*Lampona cylindrata*)

The white-tailed spider is a dark, elongated spider, 1 – 2.5 cm long with a lemon pip shape abdomen and a dull cream spot on the tip. Male spiders and juveniles often have striped legs and two or four spots at the top of the abdomen as well as one at the tip of the tail.

This spider is a common spider, which usually lives in the garden under rocks, leaf litter and the bark of trees. It does not have a permanent home, but wanders around normally at night, hunting for food, which consists of small insects and other spiders. This wandering habit, sometimes leads them into buildings or houses where they can be seen on ceilings, the floors and walls. They have been found in bundles of clothes left on the floor, washing curtain folds, bathrooms and laundries. Spiders are mostly active at night and prevalent from Spring through to late Autumn.

White-tailed Spiders are not aggressive spiders, they tend to bite only if they are provoked, threatened or startled in some way. Usually they prefer to run away. The bite can cause local burning pain followed by a variable illness. Symptoms may include an itchy lump, swelling, discoloration, blistering, ulceration, nausea, or vomiting (Australian Animal Toxins : Dr. S. Sutherland 1983). A spider bite can lead to a bacterial infection caused by rotting foodstuffs on the fangs and there is the possibility an allergic reaction to the venom.

To treat a spider bite, the wound should be washed with soap and water, dabbed with an antiseptic solution and if painful, an ice pack or anesthetic cream/lotion applied. Try and locate the spider responsible and keep it so it can be identified correctly if necessary. Keep the person bitten under observation for 1-3 hours and if their condition deteriorates seek medical attention.

This spider is suspected of causing necrotic reaction resulting in severe skin damage in approximately twelve cases in the last 10 years. But as none of the people affected can positively identify what bit them, the White-tailed Spider remains just a suspect despite the impression most people have received from recent publicity in the newspapers and on television.

The best way to deal with these spiders inside the building or house is to use some common sense. Be aware of places they like to hide, do not leave clothes on floor or shake them thoroughly before putting them on and check bedclothes before going to bed. The spiders are more active at night so they are more likely to be seen then. Either catch the spiders and put them outside or kill them by squashing or spraying with household insecticide. It should not be necessary to employ a professional pest company to spray or fumigate your house or building solely for the control of White-tailed spiders. However, it can help reduce numbers and will kill them **should they rest down onto a treated surface** before entering the building. Should you wish to have professional help, please call us on (03) 8696 9000.

