

The Herbalist

WHITE TAILED SPIDERS

January 2006



We have had a few cases of white tailed spider bites come into the clinic and thought it a good idea to give some recommendations for those of you who may be concerned and even for those who suspect they may have been bitten.

Yes these little critters are yet another Australian import. We find it strange that it is very difficult for us to export some of our herbs to Australia, even though these herbs are found wild within Australia yet it was so easy for this country to become infested with this pest!

The bite of the white tailed spider although not fatal can be painful and dangerous to your health. The last case who came in had complications from a white tailed spider bite that had left his arm badly affected – over 25% of his arm had become severely redened with inflammation and some areas were turning black! – this was not a pretty sight.

Preventing a bite is usual the best form of defence. Attempting to kill these creatures can prove hazardous. The only effective way to kill them is by brute force – fly spray has little impact and they are fast and aggressive when cornered so do be careful if you find one.

They are often found high near on the ceiling and amongst bed clothes. Therefore, avoid leaving your clothes piled up in corners of your bedroom or laundry.

Many people are not aware that they have been bitten. Often bites will occur at night when the person is asleep. Therefore watch for the following signs:

Initial bites often begin with a burning sensation followed by swelling and itchiness at the bitten area. Occasionally, weals, blistering or local ulceration appear in susceptible individuals - conditions known medically as necrotising arachnidism.

It is not only the spiders bite that can cause problems. In fact it is the bacterial infection it introduces to the wound which appears to cause the most problems.



How Do You Know You've Got White Tailed Spiders In Your Home?

One of the first signs is the absence of the normal house spider. Yes these unsavoury chaps eat other spiders. They also do not build webs.

White tailed spiders have dark reddish to grey, cigar-shaped body (males about 12 mm, females up to 18 mm long) and dark orange-brown banded legs. The grey dorsal abdomen bears two pairs of faint white spots (less distinct in adults) with a white spot at the tip; the male has a hard, narrow plate or scute on the front of the abdomen. The two common species, *Lampona cylindrata* and *L. murina*, are similar in appearance.

What To Do If You Are Bitten



We have found the best thing to do is increase your dosage of **Blood Purifying Tonic** to 10 mls 3 or 4 times daily, and apply a poultice of crushed **Plantain leaves** (*Plantago major* or *minor*). An example of a Plantain Poultice can be seen on the left. Finally, the homeopathic remedy **White Tailed Spider 30C** can be taken to help alleviate symptoms. In mild cases **Kawa Kawa** ointment may be applied daily to the affected area.

Another formula to consider is **Ledum 30c** (a homeopathic remedy suitable for all puncture wounds).

Normally we also add extra **Echinacea** and **Plantain** to your Blood Purifying Tonic. If your bite is severe we will also add **Black Cohosh**. Every case is taken individually but the basics treatment is similar.

If you have any concerns the do not hesitate to contact your health care professional – it is better to be safe than sorry when it comes to white tail spider bites.

Making Your Own Poultice

If you like you can make your own Plantain poultice. Plantain is a very common plant and both varieties are suitable for use in a poultice. Plantain is often found where people walk, hence its American Indian name “White man’s foot”. Typically you will find it around garden paths, on the lawn, and near fruit trees.



Plantain Minor

Making the poultice simply involves finding some Plantain, crushing it (you may use a mortar, pestle, or chew the plant within your mouth). Typically a large handful will make enough poultice for one spider bite (you may need to make more than one poultice though!).

Once you have created the poultice, you then need to apply it to the area. We recommend that you apply it thickly to maximise its effects. Cover the area with a telfa pad and then a stretch bandage. Leave the poultice on for twenty four hours and reapply fresh poultice after this period. Repeat this process until the wound has healed.

If you have any questions or concerns then do not hesitate to make an appointment with one of our experienced practitioners. You can contact us on (03) 332 1786 or appointments@nzherbal.com.