

John/Jina Kugler - Bughounds

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Let's go to a retirement home in Illinois where a contractor is using a highly sensitive bed bug detection system. This system is self-propelled, one hundred percent natural, highly accurate in detecting bed bugs, and when it's done, it just might climb up on your lap and lick your face. This detection system is a dog. Today we'll learn about an innovative Kansas couple that is building a business using canines for locating bed bugs. It's today's Kansas Profile.

John and Jina Kugler are the founders of this business known as Bug Hounds LLC. John grew up at Lebanon, Kansas, where he enjoyed hunting dogs. He met Jina in school and they later married. K-State drew John and Jina to Manhattan. She studied education and became a teacher and is now a school counselor in Wamego. John is a manager of a public facility in Topeka.

One day a bed bug surfaced in his facility, so he arranged for a pest control company to come clean out the problem. The company brought a dog in as a locator.

"I was skeptical," John said. After he saw the dog work, he was convinced that this was a service which others could use. After lots of research, he and Jina began their own business to offer this service, called Bug Hounds LLC.

"We are not exterminators, we're locators," John said. "However, we have expended our locating business to include Convectex heat treatment equipment rental." The Kuglers have trained dogs with an amazing knack for locating bed bugs by scent.

Their lead dog is a beagle named Beddy with an amazing sense of smell. Beddy has 300 million olfactory receptors. The part of her brain devoted to analyzing smell is 40 times that of a human. This enables Beddy to be able to smell out a bed bug at any stage, whether egg, nymph, or adult.

Bed bugs need to feed on human blood. They got their name because a bed was a great source for them to find human contact, but chairs or other personal contact items are also common hosts. In other words, bed bugs can be anywhere there are people. Bug Hounds enables anyone to locate the bed bugs for treatment.

The company website describes their service as "discrete and accurate bed bug location for businesses and individuals." "The huge advantage of the dogs is to pinpoint exactly where the bed bugs are," Jina said. Otherwise, a person could spend thousands of dollars on wasted treatments.

When assisting a customer, the Bug Hounds crew would typically go into a customer's home or business after hours and walk the facility with a dog and a tap stick. Tapping the stick can disrupt bed bugs, causing them to emit even more scent. The dogs are trained to alert by stopping or pawing at the site of the bed bugs. These amazing dogs are 95 to 98 percent accurate.

In some cases, Bug Hounds will contract with a place of business to do repeat, regular screenings. Bug Hounds has been hired by pest control

companies to locate bugs, but they work with anyone. Bug Hounds serves private residences also.

Having a clean house is no protection against bed bugs. The pests will go wherever there are people. "We've found bed bugs in cluttered houses, and we've found bed bugs in really nice and clean places," John said. An adult female averages laying 500 eggs.

Bug Hound's business has taken them as far away as Illinois and Oklahoma City. Son Jayson has now joined the company, along with three more dogs. The dogs need constant training, which they love. "We've tripled our business," John said.

That's impressive for a business founded by a man from the rural community of Lebanon, population 218 people. Now, that's rural.

For more information, go to www.bug-hounds.com.

It's time to leave this facility in Illinois, where an amazing, four-legged detection system has located exactly where the bed bug pests can be found. We salute John, Jina, and Jayson Kugler for making a difference with this unusual type of canine entrepreneurship. This business has successfully gone to the dogs.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.