

**Problem:** Minute Pirate Bugs (*Orius* sp.)



Photo courtesy of Texas A&M

**Hosts:** Too numerous to mention. Typically, the bugs are a beneficial predator and feed on small insects, mites, insect eggs and pollen grains. They can be an important predator of corn earworm eggs in corn fields.

**Description:** These bugs are pinhead size and have silver-white markings on their backs. Their bodies are oval to triangular in shape and somewhat flattened-looking. Minute pirate bugs are rarely more than one-sixteenth of an inch long. Unlike fleas and chiggers, however, minute pirate bugs have wings and can fly well.

Minute pirate bugs only occasionally move out of fields in search of new prey. When they do, it will normally be in late summer. They soon make their presence known by biting humans. Though small, these insects have a surprisingly painful bite. They use their short, blunt beak to try to probe into the skin. They do not feed on blood, inject a venom or saliva, or transmit any disease. But humans' longer-term reactions vary. Some people have no lasting effects. Some develop reddened skin at the bite site. Others get swelling that looks much like a mosquito bite.

**Recommendations:** Repellents aren't usually effective against Minute Pirate Bugs. However, you may look less attractive to them if you wear dark clothes on the warm days when minute pirate bugs are abundant.

**References:**

1. [Minute Pirate Bugs](#), Iowa Insect Information Notes, Iowa State University
2. Little Bitty Bug, Bringing Big Bite, Press Release, K-State Research and Extension, September 22, 2000

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