

# Black Widow Spider

(*Latrodectus mactans*)

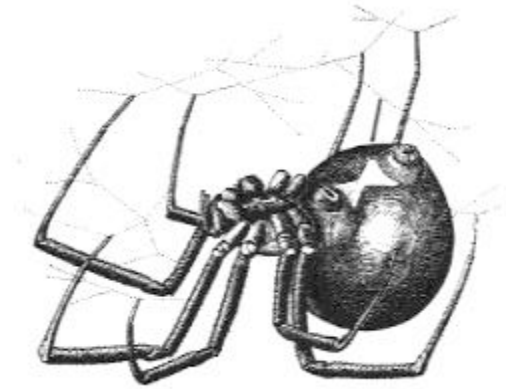
**Kingdom:** *Animalia*

**Phylum:** *Arthropoda*

**Class:** *Arachnida*

**Order:** *Araneae*

**Family:** *Theridiidae*



**SIZE:** About 1 1/2 inches long, 1/4 inch in diameter

**COLOR:** Usually shiny black

**DESCRIPTION:** The female is usually black with a red spot or hourglass-shaped mark on its round abdomen. The male usually has light streaks on its abdomen.

**HABITAT:** Black widow spiders are common around wood piles, and are frequently encountered when homeowners carry firewood into the house. Also found under eaves, in boxes, outdoor toilets, meter boxes, and other unbothered places.

**LIFE CYCLE:** Egg sacs are brown, papery, about 1/2 inch long and oval. They hold from 25 to 900 or more eggs, which have an incubation period of 20 days. Growth requires two to three months, with older females dying in autumn after egg laying.

**TYPE OF DAMAGE:** The black widow is not aggressive. It will, however, bite instinctively when touched or pressed.

**CONTROL:** Be very careful when working around areas where black widow spiders may be established. Take proper precautions-wear gloves and pay attention to where you are working. Black widow bites are sharp and painful, and the victim should go to the doctor immediately for treatment. To control the black widow, carefully remove all materials where they might hide. They can be cleaned out of an area simply by knocking down the webs, spiders, and round tan egg sacs with a stick and crushing them underfoot.

**INTERESTING FACTS:** The female eats the male after mating. She hangs belly upward and rarely leaves the web.