So you just purchased your house, and when unpacking your boxes you find out you're not alone.

Good news: Your place is not haunted.

Bad news: You have squatters. Possibly hundreds of them. It's not unusual to discover your new home has pests. Especially if it has been vacant for a while.

Of the many expenses of new home ownership, professional pest control doesn't always have to be one. Below we will explore the DIY methods of identifying, preventing and treating the top three household pests: Ants, Roaches and Mice. You can find these and many more DIY solutions at www.pests.org.

Ants

The best approach is a four-pronged approach:

1. Ants enter your home through tiny cracks or crevices – first seal any entry points, especially around heating and cooling units.
2. Next make sure your home is not ant-friendly. Reduce any crumbs, open food packaging, sticky surfaces, anything that may entice an ant.
3. Kill the scouts! Often the ants you see are on a reconnaissance mission – if your home looks hospitable to them – plenty of food, water and shelter they will return and bring the troops! If the scouts don't survive – they can't report just how inhabitable your house may be.
4. Find the nest. Ants are most active at night – try putting out some bait – it could be as simple as sugar water, grab a flashlight and see where they go. That's the nest.

Once you've done your due diligence it's time to treat. Make you own, non-toxic ant poison:

- 1 Cup warm water
- ½ Cup sugar
- 3 Tablespoons Borax

Combine all ingredients, mix well – you can microwave it to make sure the sugar melts. Once solution is cool, leave in shallow containers (old baby food jar lids or unmatched Tupperware lids are great options) where you see ants (counters, appliances, window-sills) and popular ant highways and bi-ways (along walls/baseboards). You can also soak cotton

balls with this mixture and place in the same areas to avoid spilling or a pet lapping it up.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure

After you've eradicated the infestation – or better yet before you experience an invasion you can prepare your own ant preventative:

- ½ Cup water
- ½ Cup white vinegar

Combine in a spray bottle and apply along walls, windows and doorways. Be sure to shake before spraying.

Roaches

If you see roaches skittering across the floor don't panic – identify! It's crucial to first pinpoint which of the 45,000 variety of roaches is sharing your crib. This article can help you do so.

Once you have some knowledge take thee (and your little roach carcass) to the pesticide aisle! Yes, you could try to make your own roach poison but because infestations can grow so quick and roaches are notoriously resilient a chemical approach might be the best option considering the many diseases they carry.

Now your ready to treat: With a flashlight in one hand, and a spray can in the other. Look under appliances, behind furniture, under cabinets and damp places. Some roaches feed on cardboard and paper materials so check in cluttered places like closets, attics and garages. Spray all roaches you see and the entire area liberally. If the infestation is especially large, you may decide to fog those areas rather than spay.

After you have conquered what is arguably one of the hardest pests to vanquish you can now turn to the homemade, non-toxic approach if you choose.

Roaches love coffee! You can create a Starbucks they will enter – but never leave with the following:

- 3 parts water
- 1 part coffee

Mix coffee solution in large jar – make sure not to fill all the way – roaches will crawl into jar trying to get their caffeine-fix, slip and slide into the liquid and drown.

Roaches also love chocolate! Create your own Death by Chocolate:

- 1 part diatomaceous earth (this can be purchased at any hardware store)
- 1 part cocoa powder

Combine these powders and sprinkle along baseboards or anywhere you see roaches. This combination is deadly to roaches but safe for humans.

Mice

Fortunately, if you have mice, you will know. They pretty much assault all the senses: You may see them scampering across the floor, hear them scratching the walls or smell the foul odor of deceased mice and/or droppings. Unfortunately, for every mouse you see, there are likely 10 you don't.

The only thing worse than mice? Rats. Your first step in treating a problem is identifying your target. While you may not see the vermin-in-question you will most certainly see droppings. This chart will help you identify who's living in your house rent-free.

Once you have confirmed you have a mouse issue. You need to act swiftly, mice reproduce rapidly. Mice can have litters every three weeks. One pair of mice can produce up to 64 pinkies (baby mice) a year.

Your DIY options range from lethal (with a variety of traps on the market) to humane (mouse buckets, live traps, repellents.

Depending on the severity of the problem you may want to begin with traps before employing live or repellent options. Of the many traps available the most humane is an electronic trap, such as the Victor Electronic Trap. These are also the most expensive option, but many are reusable improving on their value. You can purchase live traps or create your own using a bucket. This video will give you step-by-step instructions.

There are varying opinions on the efficacy of ultrasonic mouse repellents but there are many available at hardware stores or Amazon if that approach appeals to you. One advantage of a ultrasonic unit is that they are intended to repel a wide array of pests – not just mice.

To create your own, non-toxic repellent you can use, safe essential oils:

- 1 Cup of food-grade diatomaceous earth
- 1/8 Cup sugar
- 2-3 Drops 100% pure peppermint oil

Mix all ingredients and leave in open containers where you see mice congregating. Refurbish with a fresh mixture weekly for best results.

A simpler solution that has had some success is soap. Take a very strong-smelling soap like Irish Spring or its generic counterpart, cut into cubes and leave around entryways, attics or crawl spaces.

New home ownership is an exciting time and like most, you want to fill your home with love and laughter not creepy crawlies. This information should help you treat or prevent the most common pest problems without having to consult a professional. So your house guests are by invitation only.