

Forum: Food for thought...

Topic: Eight legged Aussies

Subject: Eight legged Brits

Posted by: keith

Posted on: 2006/11/17 15:31:32

I thought I would just let you see that you don't have all the fun with spiders down there in Oz. This story appeared in today's Daily Telegraph and now these arachnids are on the march northwards. Anyone like to bet how long it will be before they reach the Scottish border?

The text of the article is enlarged beneath the reduced image of the whole piece.

Attached file: 
False Black Widow small.jpg (26.79 KB)



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False Black Widow a small.jpg (112.38 KB)

By David Sapsted

A MAN spent three days in hospital after being bitten by a venomous spider now spreading across the country because of global warming.

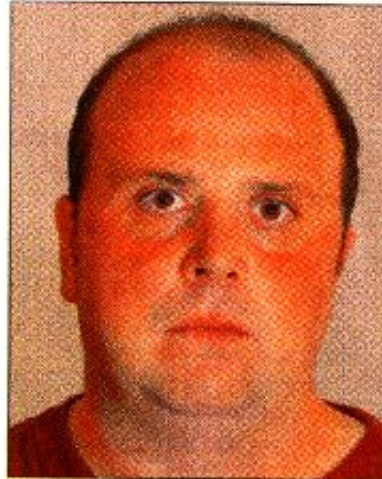
The false widow spider, a relative of the black widow, bit Jason Fricker, 34, three times on the chest and stomach after it fell down the front of his shirt a week ago.

By Sunday, after treatment as an outpatient the previous day, Mr Fricker, a father of two from Dorchester, was admitted as an emergency by doctors who believed the venom was attacking his nervous system, causing a heart attack.

The creature that caused such damage, *Steatoda nobilis*, is the only species of spider in Britain capable of biting humans. Although it has been known in Britain since arriving in Torquay in bananas from the Canary Islands in the 1870s, its numbers and range are now growing because of the milder climates.

While it is not nearly as venomous as the black widow, in recent years it has spread from the West Country across southern England as far as Sussex and is now migrating north through Surrey.

Stuart Hine, the manager of insect services at the Natural History Museum, said: "It is moving further northwards and is thought to be in London now. That's to do with the general warming up of winter



Jason Fricker: felt unwell

temperatures because they are able to survive the winter and breed.

"All spiders are venomous but the difference with these false widow spiders is that their fangs can pierce the skin. Global warming means that spiders which originate from southern Europe and North Africa and Asia are now more likely to be able to survive in Britain."

Mr Fricker, who runs a fishery and tackle shop, discovered he had been bitten as he set out his angling goods on his stall at the market.

"I was carrying the goods in a cardboard box when I think the spider must have come out of the corner of the box and went down my front," he said yesterday. "Five minutes later, I felt this sort of burning sensation on my chest like a wasp sting."

"I shook my jumper and the spider fell down on to my

Attached file: 

False Black Widow b small.jpg (106.46 KB)

↓ A web of truths

- The false widow grows to between 7mm and 14mm long and can live up to six years. It feeds on flies and other small insects and is usually found in houses and out-buildings.
- False widows have a dark, shiny body and are so named because they are often mistaken for the notorious black widow.
- The spider may have arrived in the 1980s in Portsmouth from the Canary Islands or southern Europe. It has fanned out along the South Coast and is now heading north.
- Britain is home to more than 600 species of spiders, but only the *Steatoda nobilis* is capable of biting humans.
- Almost 80 per cent of young British adults are arachnophobic, according to the Zoological Society of London.

stomach. Then it must have bitten me again and I saw this spider fall to the floor and scuttle off into the centre of Salisbury.”

Mr Fricker thought nothing of it until the next day when he started to feel unwell.

His wife Katie, 30, spotted the bites. “When the doctor saw the puncture wounds he got all excited and said: ‘You are the first person in my career I have seen who has been bitten by a spider. There is no doubt about this.’”

After identifying the spider as a false widow on a hospital computer, he was sent home with anti-histamine tablets. But the next day, his condition deteriorated. “I thought I was having a heart attack. The pain in my chest was excruciating,” he said. “I seriously thought I was going to die, it was that bad.”

Mr Fricker was admitted to Dorchester County Hospital

where doctors believed he might be having a heart seizure caused by an extreme reaction to the bite.

“I was wired up on drips and was given heart drugs. I spent three days in hospital for being bitten by something I hadn’t even heard of,” he said.

Mr Fricker, who has a son Ryan, nine, and daughter Charlotte, two, was released from hospital on Tuesday and is convalescing at home.

Doctors say that, in the vast majority of cases, the spider’s bite should be no more painful, and the medical consequences no more serious, than a wasp sting.