

## Have you seen many Spider lately?

By: Frances Nicholson and William Kelsey

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When you lose a beloved Westie, the pain in your heart drowns the Love and Joy that we feel from Westies sharing our brief lives with us. We know the pain very well right now.

Crownview's Pack, Crownview's Westie Family, Terry, and I lost our Westie, Dee Oh' Gie, to a Spider bite on August 25, 2010. Dee Oh' Gie fought for her life like a warrior princess for eleven days. As hard as it is to find the words to write and research this article we think it is important that the knowledge we have gained is shared. There are more educated people on the topic for sure. I do want you to know that like most things, some people disagree. Without the spider in hand, I know one professor who refuses to entertain the idea that a brown recluse spider or a Hobo spider bite could be at fault. We do not have the spider that bit her or a flesh sample. Dee Oh' Gie would have been 14 years old on Halloween this year and in great health.

We took Dee Oh' Gie with us to a Tractor Pull Event and Swap meet in Port Orchard. Some of the vehicles, tractors equipment and parts had been pulled out of the outdoor places where they had been idle for years. This is where Dee Oh' Gie was bit.

While at the tractor pull I realized that Dee Oh' Gie wasn't following me around, I am quit used to her being underfoot. I found Dee Oh' Gie sleeping under an outdoor chair, in the shade, not tracking my every move. At one point, I stood and stared at her in disbelief. Then I took an assessment of the situation; it was 93 degrees, Dee Oh' Gie was resting in the shade with ample clean fresh water available from home. Smart girl right! But, Dee Oh' Gie was still sleeping under the chair a couple hours later so we took her home to air conditioning. A hot day in the Northwest, right!



Two days later I we saw Dee Oh' Gie scratch her head, leaving a small amount of blood. Dee Oh' Gie's behavior was pretty lethargic by now. We didn't think it was time to be fussing with grooming around the scratch site. We took her to the vet the next day; you might imagine the surprise when on closer inspection of the scratch, a lesion was revealed. We were told it was probably a spider bite.

This picture is about day four. We had no idea about spider bites. We kept Dee Oh' Gie comfortable and hydrated with

Electrolytes.

Please remember this can happen to humans as well.

Many people have told us about their troublesome spider bites they or their animals have had, including 2 people reported people losing a limb as well. The venom from a spider destroys the cells of the flesh in a circular pattern around the lesion, which creates layers. In Dee Oh' Gie's case her skull bones were showing. The stench from the rotting flesh is indescribable!





The vets couldn't believe she was still alive and how healthy and strong she was while battling the poison/venom in her system. Dee Oh' Gie was a warrior and battled for eleven days in August, 2010.

We do not know if we could have done anything sooner; there was no reason to believe something was seriously wrong the first 3 days, besides the heat of the



day. Apparently spider bites take up to 8 hours before they begin to itch and up to 20 or more hours before they become painful.

I don't know what I thought but perhaps Dee Oh' Gie needed a pain killer for some reason. Perhaps an anti-venom injection earlier would have been helpful, however, without identifying the spider, the incorrect anti-venom could make matters worse. Our vets treated Dee Oh' Gie with Baytril for what could be a Hobo or Brown Recluse Spider bite. There is information available that activated charcoal can be administered to such a wound topically to help leach the venom/poison out. Please see: [www.brown-recluse.com](http://www.brown-recluse.com) for kits that are available to have on hand for this purpose. From what Bill Kelsey could find there is anti-venom available for Black Widow Spiders (BWS) and Brown Recluse Spiders (BRS) however, I am not sure there is for the Hobo Spider (HS). The info on the Hobo is conflicting. Some of the articles about human's indicated that if treated for the wrong spider, (i.e. the wrong anti-venom given) there was danger of more complications and apparently this has resulted in death to humans. All the information seems to point to the fact you need to have the spider that made the bite to get it right for the treatment. My thinking from reading some other articles indicated that med labs that do human skin disease work might be able to identify the chemical content of the venom so perhaps this would allow identification of the spider if the information was then provided to a specialist for spiders. Of course, with anti-venom as the snake bites, which is the area I looked at.... You need to get the identification done quickly to get the anti-venom administered as soon as possible to be effective.

The other thing in the form of a first aid administration, was the articles about treating the wound with activated charcoal, which is used in the medical world on humans to extract poison from the stomach and intestines. The site: [www.brown-recluse.com](http://www.brown-recluse.com) offers pretty inexpensive kits for this purpose with a 5 year shelf life that one might want to have around. As the main component is charcoal, it should work for Hobo spiders as well, as you are trying to leach the venom/poison away from the flesh to minimize it attacking the flesh which should be the same for either BRS or HS.



Too late for Dee Oh' Gie.

Terry built a lovely box and we have laid her to rest with her bed teddy, a toy that was her fake baby through her pregnancies, a treat, and a picture of her real face. Dee Oh' Gie's bounty wouldn't be complete without a rock; it was a special rock, just the right size. She is in the garden path next to the roses, so she will still be underfoot of Frances as she was all of her life.

Dee Oh' Gie always reminded us to have balance in our lives; play, share, hunt when you every chance you can, eat well, love, believe, trust, learn every day and live with grace, integrity, and laughter. May you remember her with the love and joy as we do! She was a grand and fair leader with boundaries that were not negotiable.

She shall be missed but remembered and loved.

Also see, but not limited to:

[http://www.ehow.com/about\\_5095160\\_symptoms-spider-bites-canines.html](http://www.ehow.com/about_5095160_symptoms-spider-bites-canines.html)

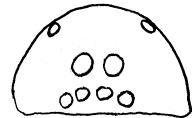
<http://www.washington.edu/burkemuseum/spidermyth/myths/hobo.html>

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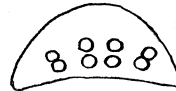
## Identifying Spiders

The most reliable way to distinguish major spider groups is by arrangement of the eyes on the "head" region of the spider. On the large spiders, this eye arrangement is readily visible. A hand lens or magnifier may make the job easier in some cases.

1. Eyes in 3 rows, arranged in 4, 2,2 pattern (Wolf spider  
Jumping spider)



2. Eyes in 2 rows of 4 (most spiders)



3. Eyes in 3 pairs (Brown recluse and  
relatives)



Using the eye arrangement is much more accurate when trying to identify Brown Recluse spiders and spiders which have been squashed.

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I encourage you to go to the following web site as there is more information about spider bites available here and elsewhere.

<http://www.washington.edu/burkemuseum/spidermyth/myths/hobo.html>

### Funnel-web Spiders (Family Agelenidae).

The aggressive house spider, *Tegenaria agrestis*, (sometimes called the **hobo spider**) is a member of the family Agelenidae, commonly called the funnel-web spiders or funnel weavers. These spiders build funnel webs in dark, moist areas, often in basements, and sit in the mouth of the funnel waiting for prey. The funnel opens at both ends, and the web expands outward into a broad, slightly curved sheet. When prey, usually an insect, becomes entangled in the web, vibrations from its struggle alert the spider, which dashes out to bite the prey. The subdued prey is quickly carried into the funnel.



Aggressive house spider in a well-defined funnel web

In Europe, members of the genus *Tegenaria* are often called house spiders since they are common inhabitants of houses and adjacent vegetation. Only a single species of *Tegenaria*, *T. chiricahuae*, is native to the United States. It occurs in caves and other dark places in Arizona and New Mexico. The other six species of *Tegenaria* found in the United States are of European origin. They were probably

introduced to this country very early through commerce.

Three species occur in the Pacific Northwest.

*Tegenaria domestica*, the domestic house spider, is common in both the Northeast and the Northwest, while *Tegenaria gigantea*, the giant house spider, has been collected to date in the Pacific Northwest and in Winnipeg, Canada. Neither of these two species are known to cause serious bite reactions in humans (Fig. 6). *T. gigantea* has been encountered more frequently than *T. agrestis* in the last few years.

Domestic house spider, *Tegenaria domestica*, in the funnel web



*Tegenaria agrestis*, the aggressive house spider, is one of the most common spiders found in houses in the Pacific Northwest. Although this spider was first reported from Seattle in 1930, it did not become common in the Pacific Northwest until the 1960s. In the Pullman-Moscow, Idaho area, it is clearly a prevalent spider in basements and in window wells of houses. It rarely climbs vertical surfaces and is usually found only on the ground or lower floors. We have called it the "aggressive house spider" because it bites with little provocation when cornered or threatened.

***Description.***

*Tegenaria agrestis* is a relatively large, swift running spider. Mature adults range from 4—5 cm diameter (1 to 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches) including legs (Fig. 7). As with most spiders, males can be identified readily by the expanded, swollen tips of their palps



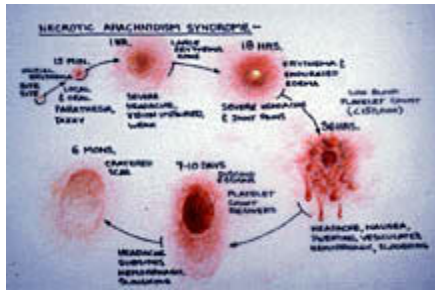
A sexually mature male *Tegenaria agrestis*  
Sexually mature males and females are abundant from mid-summer (July) through fall.

During this period males tend to wander relatively long distances in search of females. Eggs are laid into a spherical silken sac spun by the female, usually in September or October in the Pullman area. The sac is then placed within or adjacent to the funnel, usually on the underside of a rock or other object. This sac is usually covered with a thin layer of soil, wood chips, or other debris, including prey. The debris coated sac then is often covered with another layer of silk. Eggs hatch the following spring. Most *Tegenaria* molt about 10 times over a span of 2 years before reaching sexual maturity. Immatures are commonly found wandering in the spring searching for web sites.

Investigations of aggressive house spider bites show the venom produces skin injuries, or lesions, similar to those produced by the brown recluse. Therefore, ulcerating lesions of this type occurring on humans in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho are probably due to bites by the aggressive house spider. Surprisingly, males are somewhat more venomous than females.

Bites commonly occur as a spider is squeezed against the body when a homeowner picks up a firewood log with a spider on it or when a spider is located in an article of clothing and is squeezed when the clothing is put on.

The initial bite is not painful. It has been described as producing a very slight prickling sensation. However, a small, insensitive, hard area appears within 30 minutes or less, and is surrounded by an expanding reddened area of 5—15 cm in diameter (2—6 inches)



## Typical bite sequence pathology for the aggressive house spider

Within 15 to 35 hours the area blisters. About 24 hours later the blisters usually break, and the wound oozes serum. A cratered ulcer crusts over to form a scab. Tissues beneath the scab may die and slough away. In some cases the loss of tissue may become so severe that surgical repair is needed.

The fully developed lesion can vary from about 1/2 to 1 inch or more in diameter. Lesions may take several months to heal, and frequently leave a permanent scar

### A *Tegenaria agrestis* bite on finger

Systemic illness may or may not accompany the bite. However, the most common symptom is a severe headache, sometimes occurring within 30 minutes, usually within 10 hours, that does not respond to aspirin. The headache may persist for 2 to 7 days, and is sometimes accompanied by nausea, weakness, tiredness, temporary loss of memory, and vision impairment. The symptoms are similar to those experienced with migraine headaches. Bites by *Tegenaria agrestis* have not caused a death. In Europe, their area of origin, there are few records of bites by these spiders causing medical problems. However, a person bitten by one of these spiders should seek immediate medical treatment.

