

LICE WORLD

Shocking reason **WHY** you don't need to worry about lice in your house!

Ian Burgess, entomologist and director at [Medical Entomology Centre \(MEC\), England](#). For more than 30 years Ian has been undertaking research on head lice and has carried out clinical assessments on a broad range of products for the control of head lice.

How do head lice maintain their fluid balance

Head lice dehydrate fast. This is because they have a different fluid balance to most other bloodsucking insects.

Normally, many bloodsucking insects get rid of their surplus water via their urine or feces – this is not the case for the head louse. It excretes only dry feces.

By contractions of their blood-filled intestine, the water is squeezed out into their body fluid (see video at the right). Then the head lice secrete the surplus water through their widely ramified respiratory system. The dry feces, which look like small black beads on a string, prove an advantage to the head lice as they fall out of the hair or are dissolved when the hair is washed. Thus, as they soil the scalp and hair of the host only to a small degree, the head lice have a relatively small risk of being detected because of their feces.

However, the somewhat unique fluid balance of the head louse makes it more exposed should it become separated from its host. **If the louse is removed from its host for more than three hours, it will be incapable of sucking blood should it come back to a host. This is probably because it gets too dehydrated to be able to produce sufficient saliva to prevent the blood from clotting while sucking the blood.**

According to this research, after just THREE hours off a head, a louse is too dehydrated to SURVIVE and will not recover! No need for frenzied cleaning of your entire house!