

When Christmas comes with 25,000 freeloaders

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A vendor displays Christmas decorations on a christmas tree in a shop on December 7 in Johannesburg. Get a magnifying glass and take a close look at your Christmas tree, says a scientist. In all likelihood, it is harbouring thousands of bugs.

"Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse."

Er, not quite.

Get a [magnifying glass](#) and take a close look at your [Christmas tree](#), says a scientist.

In all likelihood, it is harbouring thousands of bugs.

Bark lice, mites, moths and the odd spider are among the tiny creatures that live on [pine trees](#) and find themselves dragged into homes when Christmas comes around, says Bjarte Jordal at Norway's University Museum of Bergen.

Stimulated by the lights and warmth, they emerge from [hibernation](#) in your living room.

"In research on Christmas trees there have been found as many as 25,000 individual (insects)... in some of the trees," says Jordal.

He adds, though: "As they cannot feed on the limited plants found in most households, the bugs will quickly dry out and die.

"These insects and bugs do not constitute any risk or danger to people or furniture. And if anyone is worried about allergic reactions, I don't think there's any danger of that."

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