



Pantry Pests

Two of the more interesting pantry pests are the cigarette and drugstore beetles. These two insects are similar in form. The adults are small oval-shaped beetles about 0.08 – 0.14 inch in length. The cigarette beetle is usually light brown, while the drugstore beetle is reddish to reddish-brown.

The mature larvae of both beetles are C-shaped, white, and about 0.16 inch in length. Both beetles are found throughout the United States. The cigarette beetle is considered to be more tropical in distribution and relies on heated buildings to survive winters in temperate areas. The drugstore beetle is more temperate in distribution and is quite capable of surviving outdoors. As adults, both beetles are capable of flight and typically will enter homes through open doors and windows during the spring and summer months. Once in the home, the beetles will lay eggs near potential food sources, which in this case, could be almost anything. These beetles can be found feeding on tobacco, books, dried plants, canvas paintings, just about any spice, cookies, flour, pasta, cotton, medicine, dog food, ornaments and wreaths, and mouse poison.

If either of these beetles become established in your home, there are a number of things you can do to help eliminate the problem. First, you need to determine where the larvae are feeding. Infested items should be discarded. While freezing infested items will kill larvae and adults, the eggs and pupa are very resistant to cold temperatures.

Vacuum cupboards using a crevice tool to help remove most eggs and larvae. Some eggs and larvae will remain in cracks and crevices. For this reason, place all new and un-infested pantry items in re-sealable containers. The best way to reduce adult beetle numbers is to eliminate access to the inside. Check windows, doors, and screens for cracks and holes. Repair or replace damaged screens. Repair cracks and holes by filling them with caulking compound. As a last resort, there are insecticides (i.e. Propoxur and Pyrethroids) that can be used to reduce the number of beetle larvae and adults in the home.

Caution

Please check with your local University of Illinois Extension office before using any pesticide recommended in this bulletin.

*FOR THE SAFE USE OF ANY PESTICIDE,
ALWAYS READ AND FOLLOW LABEL DIRECTIONS.*



Adult Drugstore Beetles

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