

Biscuit beetles

Advice leaflet about Biscuit beetles

The biscuit beetle is found worldwide, but more commonly in temperate latitudes. It is common throughout the UK, especially in food storage and retailing premises, and is frequently encountered as a domestic pantry pest.

Biscuit beetles belong to the same family as the common Furniture Beetle or woodworm and as such are capable of chewing into fairly hard materials. They are small reddish-brown insects only about 3mm long, which attack stored foods in domestic larders. Flour, biscuits, cake mixes, cereals, spices, meat and soup powders will attract them, and they have even been found thriving on such poisonous substances as strychnine – hence the beetle's American name, Drug Store Beetle.

Biology

The eggs are laid freely amongst the larval foodstuff and the newly hatched larvae crawl or chew their way through most packaging materials to feed voraciously.

After two months or so, depending on temperature, the larvae pupate inside cocoons, often within the food material, and one or two weeks later the adults hatch, their exit holes resembling typical 'woodworm' exit holes. Mating takes place soon after exit. The adults do not feed but will fly from original source of infestation and will lay their eggs in other commodities and they are commonly found in association with bird's nests. They live for relatively short periods of three to four weeks. The complete life cycle takes between 12-33 weeks.

Importance

This is one of the more serious food industry pests due to its widespread occurrence, its flight/dispersal capability and its ability to breach most forms of packaging. It is common in small storerooms and domestic larders, often producing spectacular infestations in old stock packets of breakfast foods and biscuits etc. Frequently these infestations die out as available food diminishes and fugal developments in the packets take over.

Control

The source of infestation should be traced and if possible, eliminated. Thoroughly clean out any food residues from areas where the beetles or their grubs are found; then use a puffer pack of insect powder or a household insecticide aerosol over the surfaces and into any crevices where they may lurk. If this is not practical, professional treatment should be considered.

The application of a residual insecticide, following a thorough cleaning of the infested area, should form the basis of an **on-going control programme**.

Local Authority Service

If you do not wish to try to deal with an infestation yourself, the Environmental Health Department does offer a service, although there is a charge for this. If you would like a Pest Control Officer to visit to treat the infestation, please telephone the department on **01799 510370** to make an appointment. A fixed standard charge is made to cover this service. Also should the initial treatment be unsuccessful within two weeks one further treatment will be carried out to at no extra cost.

We accept the following credit/debit cards: VISA, VISA DELTA, MASTERCARD, SWITCH. Please have your details ready when requesting an appointment.

All products used by the Council are approved for use on domestic and commercial premises under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. Alternatively, there are a number of private pest control companies that will also do this work, and you can find more details from the local telephone directory.