

Hide beetles

Advice leaflet about Hide beetles

There are more than 50 species of Dermestes, known collectively as Hide Beetles, and a few of these are common as domestic pests. This is a serious pest in commercial and domestic kitchens, particularly around food cupboards, cookers and refrigerators.

Significance

Hide Beetles infest a wide variety of substances, especially those of animal origin. Both adults and larvae feed on cured meats, dried fish, cheeses, raw skins, hides, furs, feathers, hair, fish meal, dry dog and cat food, stored tobacco, stuffed animals, museum specimens, abandoned birds nests, dead rodents in wall partitions or chimneys, dead beehives and even rat or mouse poison baits. Infestations are often hard to locate because beetles and larvae can migrate far from the original food source.

Damage is mainly caused by the larvae, which bore holes in materials, either as they feed or as they pupate. The soft sapwood of wooden structures are preferred pupation sites, however they will excavate plaster, lead and tin. The adult beetles may cause similar damage.

Appearance/Lifecycle

The adults are black in colour, oval shaped and approximately 5.5-10mm long and densely covered in hairs. The larvae are quite distinct - up to 14mm long, dark brown banded with distinctive bristles, known as 'woolly bears'.

The female lays up to 200 her eggs on materials such as hides and skins which are suitable for larval development. The eggs are white, 2mm long and often laid in the crevices of commodities. The larvae that hatch out in about 1 week will feed on almost any dry or decomposing material. They will occasionally feed on vegetable matter. During the larval stages they actively avoid light and if disturbed feign death by lying still, curling themselves up in the process. The speed of larval development depends upon conditions and may extend beyond a year. Generally the pupal stage is completed in 2-4 weeks and the full cycle in 2-12 months.

Control Measures

The first step in control is to trace the source of the infestation. This is usually obvious in commercial premises although it can be more obscure in domestic premises and can often be associated with dead rodents or old birds' nests.

The most important control measure is to thoroughly clean all areas affected by Hide Beetles. All food debris must be cleared in and around food cupboards, cookers, refrigerators and all other areas of the kitchen and affected rooms. All foodstuffs affected must be disposed of. Good hygiene is the way to control these beetles. An integrated control program of cleaning and spraying with a residual insecticide will control most infestations.

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.