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1960

Control of Some Food Insects in the Home

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Recommended Citation

Extension, Cooperative, "Control of Some Food Insects in the Home" (1960). *SDSU Extension Fact Sheets*. 184.

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Food Insects In the Home

Control of Some Food Insects In the Home

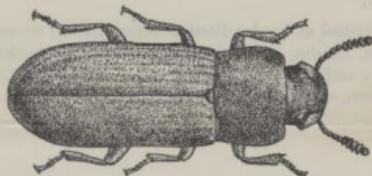
INSECTS CAN INVADE even the most well-kept house. We don't know how much they cost the housewife, but the amount of food that must be thrown away because of insect infestations is undoubtedly high.

Ways to control a few of the more common household insects are outlined here. For further information on these and other food pests you may find, contact your local County Extension Agent or write to the Extension Entomologist, South Dakota State College, Brookings. If you send specimens of insects to the college for identification, be sure to pack them in a strong box or carton—don't mail them in envelopes. Give as much information as you can—where found, what the insects were feeding on, and what type of damage they were doing.

BRAN BUGS

This group includes the small, dark red beetles which infest cereals, flour, sugar, corn meal, nuts, and dried beans. Bran bugs are also stored grain pests and feed on broken grain kernels or grain debris in bins. The most common insects in the group are the confused flour beetle, the red flour beetle, and the saw-toothed grain beetle.

Confused flour beetles are about an eighth of an inch long. They are easily confused with the red flour beetle. Beetles live about a year, and the females lay about 450



Confused Flour Beetle (actual size— $\frac{1}{8}$ inch long)

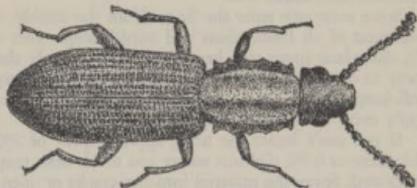
eggs. The eggs are laid in grain and flour and hatch into small, worm-like larvae. Under favorable conditions, a life cycle may be completed in 6 weeks.

Red flour beetles, besides being almost identical in appearance and habit to the confused flour beetle, are often found with confused flour beetles.

Saw-toothed grain beetles are much smaller and more slender than the flour beetles. The grain beetles also tend to be darker. They are flattened and about

By William M. Hantsbarger, Extension entomologist

a tenth of an inch long. Both the beetles and larvae are found in flour, cereals, dried fruits, and nuts.



Saw-Toothed Grain Beetle (actual size— $\frac{1}{10}$ inch long)

Control of Bran Bugs. The best way to control bran bugs is to keep spilled flour, cereals, cake mixes, sugar, and other foods cleaned up. For further protection, keep these foods in tight containers, preferably metal canisters.

If you find any bran bugs in your cupboards or around the home, try to find their breeding places. Discard all infested foodstuffs immediately. Next, thoroughly clean all cupboards and food storage places, using a good detergent and water. Clean all corners and cracks carefully.

After you remove all food products from the shelves and cupboards, and have cleaned the area, treat with an insecticide. A 1% solution of methoxychlor or a 5% solution of DDT will do the job. The best way to apply the insecticide is as a paint with a paint brush. However, in most cases, a spray of these same insecticides will be satisfactory. After the insecticide is dry, you can put food back into the cupboards and shelves. One thorough application of an insecticide should be adequate. Pests may be seen in small numbers for a little while after treatment before disappearing entirely.

ANTS

Several species of ants invade homes, getting into food supplies and otherwise pestering people. Some ants seek sweet food such as sugar, honey, syrup, jams, and candy. Others do not feed on sweets but seek out fats, greases, or proteins. Still others do not attack foodstuffs at all, but are a general nuisance.

Ants have their homes, or colonies, in many places—soil, rotting wood, under stones, and in walls. Ant societies in a colony are highly organized. Usually it is the worker ants that annoy you. It is their duty to build nests, search for food, and care for the queen, eggs, and immature ants.

Control of Ants. First, find the ants' nest if you can. Notice the surface over which they crawl. Ants often move in a line and you may be able to back-track them to their colony. If you can locate the nest, apply an insecticide on it. A 2% spray of chlordane is very effective against ants in the nest. A 5% granular formulation of chlordane also works well.

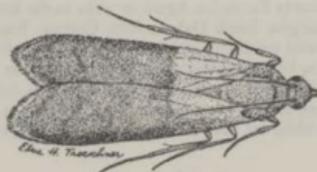
Since most ants enter the home from the outside, a treatment of all foundations and outside steps with a 2% chlordane spray will keep them away. Apply the spray to open areas under porches as well. The spray will keep other insect pests out of the house too. Re-apply every month through the warm season.

If you can't locate the nests, apply a spray of 2% chlordane or 0.5% dieldrin where you think nests may be located. Spray the material into any cracks or openings which ants can use to enter a room and on nearby surfaces. Spray once a month. If ants continue to appear following treatment, look for other possible entries and spray them.

INDIAN MEAL MOTH

Adult meal moths are small and often mistaken for clothes moths. The clothes moths are plainly marked,

however, while the meal moth is colored. The forewings are copper colored on the outer two-thirds portion. Wing span is about one-half inch. Larvae or caterpillars grow to about one-half inch and are dirty-white. Caterpillars spin a fine webbing as they crawl about and feed. If you find this webbing on food, Indian meal moths are probably present. Food materials attacked include dried fruits, nuts, seeds, dried milk, dog biscuits, and cereals.



Indian Meal Moth (actual size— $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long)

Control of Indian Meal Moths. Control measures outlined for bran bugs will also help control this pest.

LARDER BEETLES

Larder beetles are occasional pests of cured meats, cheese, and other food products of animal origin. Larder beetles are about one-fourth inch long and black. The common larder beetle has a pale yellow band across the base of the wing covers. Larvae are brown and quite hairy.

Control of Larder Beetles. Wrap smoked meats in paper, muslin, or cloth immediately after smoking. Spray walls of your storehouse with 5% DDT, 0.5% dieldrin, or 2% chlordane. Smoked meats held in cold storage will not be attacked by the larder beetles.