



ENTFACT-601

CARPET BEETLES

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Carpet beetles, as their name implies, are capable of damaging carpets. These pests will also feed upon many other materials besides carpets and will attack any item composed of animal fibers such as wool, furs, silk, feathers, felt and leather. Serious infestations of carpet beetles can develop undetected in a home, causing significant damage to clothing, bedding, floor coverings and other articles.

Identification and Habits

Although there are many different species of carpet beetles, the adults of all species are small, oval-shaped beetles about 1/8 inch long (Fig.1). The black carpet beetle (the most common species) is shiny black. Adults of other common species are brightly colored in various patterns of white, brown, yellow and orange. The *larvae* or immature stages of carpet beetles are about 1/4 inch long and *densely covered with hairs or bristles*. Only the larval stage feeds on fabric and causes damage. The adults feed on flowers, but are often seen indoors around light fixtures and windows, indicating that a larval infestation is present somewhere within the home.

As mentioned earlier, carpet beetles feed on a variety of animal-based materials including wool, fur, silk, feathers and leather. Items commonly infested include wool sweaters, coats, blankets, carpets, down pillows and comforters, and upholstered furniture. Synthetic fabrics such as polyester and rayon are rarely attacked unless they are heavily soiled with food stains or body oils. They prefer to feed in dark, undisturbed areas such as closets, attics, within boxes where woollens and furs are stored, along and under the edges of carpeting, underneath upholstered furniture, and in air ducts where they feed on lint, pet hair and other bits of debris.

Carpet beetle infestations may also originate from bird or animal nests or an animal carcass present in an attic, chimney or wall void. They also occasionally feed on seeds, pet food or cereal products in the kitchen or pantry.

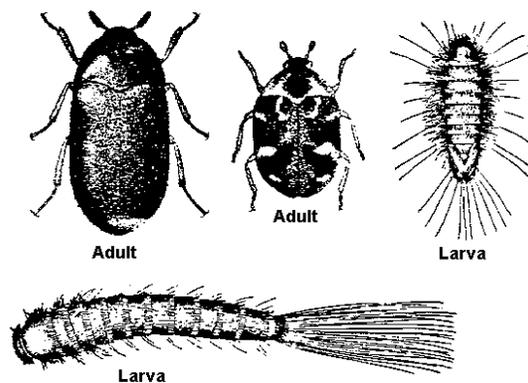
Control

The best way to avoid carpet beetle problems is through prevention. Woolens and other susceptible fabrics should be dry cleaned or laundered before being stored for long periods. Cleaning not only removes perspiration odors

that are attractive to the beetles, but also kills any eggs or larvae that may be present. Articles to be stored should then be packed with moth balls or flakes in tight-fitting containers. Insecticides should **not** be used to treat clothing. However, mothproofing solutions may be applied to susceptible clothing by professional dry cleaners.

Routine vacuuming effectively removes carpet beetles which are already present, as well as hair and lint which could support future infestations. Particular attention while vacuuming should be paid to the edges of carpets, along baseboards, underneath furniture and similar "quiet" areas where carpet beetles prefer to feed. Insecticide applications directed into infested areas are often useful as a supplement to good housekeeping. Products containing active ingredients such as chlorpyrifos, permethrin, bendiocarb and allethrin are effective against carpet beetles. Sprays may be applied to carpets (especially beneath and along the edge adjacent to the baseboard), underneath furniture and other likely areas of infestation where prolonged contact with humans is unlikely. Clothing and bedding should not be sprayed and should be removed before treatment.

Control of carpet beetles requires patience and a thorough inspection to locate all sources of infestation. Elimination of widespread, ongoing infestations may require the services of a professional pest control operator. 11/25/1997



COMMON CARPET BEETLES

Fig. 1. Adults (top) and larvae (bottom) of common carpet beetle species found in homes