

# KENTUCKY PEST NEWS

ENTOMOLOGY · PLANT PATHOLOGY · WEED SCIENCE

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**Number 1182**

**November 17, 2008**

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## ALFALFA

- Black legume aphid flight continues

## HOUSEHOLD

- There's a hole in my sweater!
  - Stored product pests
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## ALFALFA

### BLACK LEGUME APHID FLIGHT CONTINUES by Lee Townsend

The last issue of KPN (#1181 Oct 27) contained an article in the Alfalfa section that reported a significant field infestation on the black legume (cowpea) aphid. This is an insect to watch because, unlike the pea aphid, it can damage alfalfa. Symptoms can include yellowing, wilting, and dieback. This aphid injects a toxin into plants as it feeds that can stunt or kill plants. It also produces lots of liquid waste (honeydew) that supports sooty mold growth.

Flight has continued according to the Lexington trap (below) with a substantial catch during the first week of November in Lexington.

Recent suction trap captures (Lexington)

Date	Aphids
Oct 17	11
Oct 24	14
Oct 31	4
Nov 7	92

More information on this insect is available in the article.

## HOUSEHOLD

### THERE'S A HOLE IN MY SWEATER! by Mike Potter

Now is the time when clients begin calling about fabric pests infesting items unpacked from storage. Signs of infestation often are subtle — a few small holes chewed in a sweater, skirt or blanket. These likely were inflicted by clothes moths or carpet beetles. They will feed on any

item composed of animal fiber, e.g., wool, fur, silk, feathers, felt or leather. Items commonly infested include wool sweaters, coats, blankets, rugs, upholstered furniture, toys and animal trophies. Cotton and synthetic fabrics such as polyester and rayon are rarely attacked unless blended with wool, or heavily soiled with food stains or body oils. Serious infestations of clothes moths and carpet beetles can develop undetected in a home, often causing irreparable damage to household articles.

### THE CULPRITS

Carpet beetles - Carpet beetles are common in buildings, and can infest many items in addition to fabrics. Larvae are about 1/8 to 1/4-inch long, tan to brownish in color, slow moving, and *densely covered with hairs or bristles*. This is the life stage likely to be encountered now, since only the larvae feed on fabrics and cause damage. Oftentimes, only the shed (molted) skins of the larvae are present on the damaged item. Adult carpet beetles feed mainly on flowers and usually appear indoors during the springtime. The adult beetles are small (1/16 to 1/8-inch), oval-shaped, and range in color from black to various patterns of white, brown, yellow and orange. They often appear around windows, indicating that an infestation is present somewhere within the home.

Clothes moths - Clothes moths are small, 1/2-inch, buff-colored moths with narrow wings fringed with hairs. Like carpet beetles, they damage fabric only in the larval stage. Adult clothes moths are seldom seen because they avoid light, preferring to hide in dark places such as closets. *Clients who report seeing tiny moths in the kitchen and other well-lighted areas are probably seeing grain moths originating from stored foods, e.g., cereal, dried fruit, nuts, or pet food.* Clothes moth larvae spin silken feeding tubes or patches of webbing as they move about on the surface

of fabrics. They also deposit tiny fecal pellets similar in color to the fabric.

## THE SOLUTION

Current infestations- Controlling an existing problem requires a thorough inspection to locate all infested items and locations. The primary source may be an old woolen scarf at the back of a closet, a fur or felt hat in a box, an unused remnant of wool carpeting, or an abandoned bird or squirrel nest up in the attic. Larvae prefer to feed in dark, undisturbed areas where woolens and other susceptible items are stored for long periods. When inspecting clothing, pay attention to seams, folds, and creases (e.g. cuffs and collars) where larvae often prefer to feed. Larvae also may be found along and beneath edges of rugs and carpeting. Use needle-nose pliers to lift the outer edge of wall-to-wall carpet from the tack strip along baseboards. Other possible locations include beneath/within upholstered furniture or inside heat ducts and floor vents with accumulations of pet hair and lint. Occasionally, infestations may originate from bird or animal nests in an attic, chimney, or wall cavity. Carpet beetles, in particular, will also feed on pet food, birdseed, and grain/cereal products associated with kitchens, basements or garages.

Infested items should be laundered, dry-cleaned or discarded. Laundering (warm cycle) or dry-cleaning kills any eggs or larvae that may be present. Vacuuming floors, carpets, and inside heating vents effectively removes larvae as well as hair and lint, which could support future infestations. Be sure to vacuum along and beneath edges of carpets, along baseboards, underneath furniture and stored items, and inside closets and quiet areas where carpet beetles and clothes moths prefer to feed.

Insecticides applied to infested rugs and carpets may be helpful as a supplement to good housekeeping. Sprays containing active ingredients labeled for flea control (e.g., permethrin) or with fabric insects listed on the label are effective. When treating, pay particular attention to carpet edges, floor/wall junctions, beneath furniture, and bottoms of closets. **Infested clothing or bedding should not be sprayed with insecticides and should instead be laundered or dry-cleaned.**

Avoiding future problems- The best way to avoid future problems with fabric pests is prevention. Woolens and other susceptible items should be dry-cleaned or laundered before being stored for long periods. Cleaning kills any eggs or larvae that may be present, and removes perspiration odors that tend to attract pests. Articles to be stored should then be packed in tight-fitting plastic bags or containers. Customers choosing to

use mothballs or flakes should be encouraged to read and follow label directions. The vapors from these materials are only effective if maintained at sufficient concentrations. Effective concentrations can best be achieved by sealing susceptible items (with the manufacturers' recommended dosage of moth crystals) in large plastic bags within in tight-fitting trunks, boxes or chests. Contrary to popular belief, cedar closets or chests are seldom effective by themselves because the seal is insufficient to maintain lethal or repellent concentrations of the volatile oil of cedar.

Conventional household insecticides should *not* be used to treat clothing. Valuable garments such as furs can further be protected by cold storage — a service offered by some furriers and department stores.

Additional tips on fabric pest prevention, control, and repair of damaged items can be found in entomology publications *Carpet Beetles* and *Clothes Moths*, or IP-50, *Fabric Insect Pests*. Elimination of persistent infestations in a home or business may require the help of a professional pest control firm.

## STORED PRODUCT PESTS by Lee Townsend

Drugstore beetles and Indian meal moths are common stored product pests in Kentucky homes. They can infest a range of products including cereals, spices, dry pet food, meals, and processed mixes. The adults are strong fliers so they can be found most anywhere in the house, often far from the infested material.

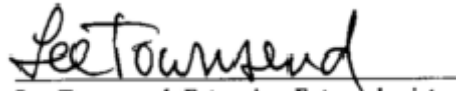
The key to eliminating stored product pests is to find and destroy infested products or breeding sites. They will always be associated with food-based materials but they also can live in food that has accumulated in cracks and crevices of shelving. Examine boxes and bags of processed foods, like meals and mixes, for tiny holes in the packages. Look inside opened containers for signs of infestation.

Remove all food from storage area and discard infested materials. Then, use a strong suction vacuum cleaner with crevice attachment to clean shelves and in cracks and crevices. If shelving is removable, clean all surfaces, including backs, where insects or small amounts of food can be overlooked. Look around bottom lips of cans and other containers for hiding beetles. They can be wiped up with soapy water and discarded.

### Prevention

Check packaging dates when buying products. Do not buy products in damaged packages. Purchase seldom used foods in small amounts and store in sealed

containers. Store in refrigerator or freezer. Mark the purchase date packages so oldest can be used first. Promptly clean up spilled flour, mixes, crumbs, etc. and thoroughly vacuum and clean areas where the contaminated items were stored. Store foods in airtight glass, metal or plastic containers. Clear containers make it easier to check for infestation.



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*NOTE: Trade names are used to simplify the information presented in this newsletter. No endorsement by the Cooperative Extension Service is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products that are not named.*

