

Larder Beetles

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Adult larder beetles (*Dermestes lardarius*) are 1/3 inch black beetles with a broad, pale tan, black spotted band across the front portion of the wing covers. The reddish brown larvae are densely covered with short and long hairs, and two curved spines on the top of the tail end. Both adults and larvae feed on high protein food sources including; cured and spoiled meats, dried fish, high protein pet food, dead insects such as cluster flies and boxelder bugs, furs, feathers, leather, cheeses, dead rodents and birds in chimneys or wall partitions, and even rat or mouse poison baits. Close relatives of the larder beetle are used to clean the flesh from skeletons used in museums.



Adult Larder Beetle

Life cycle: Larder beetles overwinter as adults in protected places. In spring adults are attracted to areas that have suitable food. Females can lay over 100 eggs, which take about 2 weeks to hatch. Larvae will feed for 40-50 days on high protein food before pupating to adult beetles. The total life cycle takes about 2 months.

When larvae are searching for a place to transform and pupate they have a habit of boring into wood and other hard materials. One reason for such protected sites is to avoid cannibalism during the pupation period. Larvae can easily chew through paper, light plastic, cork, tin or into foam insulation. Structural problems have occurred in poultry and mink operations that have protein rich food sources that remain undisturbed.

Control: The first step in control is to identify and dispose of the food source. An infested bag of dog food is easily cleaned up and without a food source the problem will be solved. Larder beetles are controlled on contact by many indoor insecticides, but failure to find a food source means you have not identified the breeding site and the problem may reoccur.



Insect bombs are ineffective in controlling larder beetles because they do not penetrate into walls. Sonic devices do not work and there are no reliable repellents. Although larder beetles are a type of carpet beetle they only attack woollens that have been soiled with blood, fish oils, or other high protein stains.

Finding the source of one or two beetles may be very difficult. Adult larder beetles are attracted to night-lights or may have bred on a small food source such as a dead mouse. If larder beetles and their larvae are found in high numbers or have been a reoccurring problem a large food source or a renewable food source (dead cluster flies or boxelder bugs in the walls) is the cause. Knowing why you have the problem will lead to a solution.

If it appears the food source is within a wall it will likely be best to let the problem run its course. When the beetles have exhausted the food source they will disappear. Problems sometimes are associated with beetles and larvae falling through light fixtures into the living space. Taping or screening access will reduce this type of nuisance.

Homes need to be sealed to prevent cluster flies and boxelder bugs from entering. (Cluster Flies- Extension Bulletin A 2090). Caulking, screening, and sealing openings will keep these insects out of wall voids and attics. Once inside, many of these insects die before the spring and make a high protein food source that will be renewed each fall if action is not taken.

Cleanup of the food source is always the best approach to controlling larder. But if the food source can not be identified, spraying baseboards, around electrical plates and other access points into walls with any indoor ant spray will kill the beetles that come into contact with the spray. Because larvae and adults migrate from the food source it is not always effective to just spray the site where insects have been found. Adults and larvae can be vacuumed or swept up if numbers are small. For infestations located in foam insulation, dust or powder type insecticides are preferred. The solvents found in many liquids may melt insulation.

Heating objects to 130 degrees F. for 2-3 hrs. or placing objects in a deep freeze at 0 degrees F for 24 hrs will kill adults and larvae in objects or pet food. Storing pet food in tight fitting plastic container will provide protection and help confine existing infestations.

For More Information contact your local extension office