

Cigarette beetle and drugstore beetle fact sheet

The cigarette beetle and the drugstore beetle closely resemble one another, but the cigarette beetle is more common. Both beetles are about 1/8-inch long, cylindrical, and uniformly light brown. The easiest way to distinguish the two is by the wing covers: the wing covers of the drugstore beetle have longitudinal grooves, while those of the cigarette beetle are smooth.



The cigarette beetle feeds on cured tobacco, cigarettes, and cigars. It also feeds on dried herbs, spices, nuts, cereals and cereal products, dried fruit, seeds, and animal products such as dried fish and meats, hair, and wool. In the home this beetle is most commonly found in pet foods, cereals, nuts, and candy. It may also infest dried pepper arrangements, wreaths, and spices such as chilli powder or paprika.

The cigarette beetle lays its eggs in the food substance. The small, yellowish white grubs are covered with long, silky, yellowish brown hairs and are about 1/6-inch long when fully grown. The pupae are within a closed cell composed of small particles of the food substance cemented together with a secretion of the larvae. The period from egg to adult is about 6 weeks.

The drugstore beetle is a very general feeder, attacking a great variety of stored foods, seeds, pet foods, spices, and pastry mixes, and has been said to "eat anything except cast iron." It gets its name from its habit of feeding on almost all drugs found in pharmacies. In the home, however, the most common food materials infested by this beetle are pet foods, drugs, and cereals. The drugstore beetle lays eggs in almost any dry, organic substance. After hatching, the small, white grubs tunnel through these substances and, when fully grown, pupate in small cocoons. The entire life cycle may take place in less than 2 months.

Dealing with the cigarette beetle and drugstore beetle

Getting rid of food-infesting moths or beetles takes continuous, persistent effort if the infestation has been present for a while. Some pests are capable of living for many weeks without food, thus the threat of reinfestation exists until they die off or are killed. Follow the guidelines for removing and cleaning up an infestation. It is best, at least for several months after eliminating the infested products, to store any susceptible food in airtight containers or in a refrigerator or freezer. Also, as a general practice, storing infrequently used food items (e.g., pancake flour, grains, spices, etc.) in the freezer prevents infestations from developing.