



CIGARETTE BEETLE

Lasioderma serricorne (Fabricius)

INTRODUCTION

The cigarette beetle is a common insect in Pennsylvania that infests many types of stored products. It often is confused with a related species, the drugstore beetle, *Stegobium paniceum* (Linnaeus), which is more elongate in proportion to its width and has distinctly striated wing covers. In Pennsylvania, the cigarette beetle is an important pest of dried plant materials such as herbs, spices, and dried flowers.

DESCRIPTION

The adult cigarette beetle is a small, stout, oval, reddish-yellow or brownish-red beetle about 0.1 inch (2-3 mm) long. The head is bent down at nearly a right angle to the body, giving the beetle a humped appearance when viewed from the side. Unlike those of the drugstore beetle, the wing covers are not striated, and the antennae are the same thickness from base to tip. Cigarette beetle larvae are yellowish-white and grub-shaped, with three sets of forelegs and a brown head capsule. Cigarette beetle larvae are hairier than those of the drugstore beetle. The larvae are about 0.1 inch long when fully grown.



Cigarette beetle adult



Cigarette beetle adult

LIFE HISTORY

Adult cigarette beetles live 2 to 4 weeks. Adult females lay as many as 100 eggs singly on food materials. The eggs are white and oval-shaped and hatch in 6 to 10 days. After hatching, the larvae tunnel through the food material, causing destruction of the grain and contamination. They become fully grown in 30 to 50 days and enter the pupal stage, which lasts 8 to 10 days or more, depending on the temperature. Pupae are covered by a silken cocoon and bits of their food material. The entire life cycle may take from 45 to 50 days. The developmental period from egg to adult is quite variable, but typically takes 6 to 8 weeks under favorable conditions.

DAMAGE

This is the most important insect pest of stored tobacco. Package and chewing tobaccos, cigars, and cigarettes that have been attacked by cigarette beetles have holes eaten through the tobacco. Cigarette beetle adults and larvae also are omnivorous pests of other stored products. They can be found in stored grains, where they feed on debris or dead insects and damage the grain. Their main impact in households is on stored commodities, such as spices, rice, ginger, raisins, pepper, drugs, seeds, and dried flower arrangements. They even feed on pyrethrum powder strong enough to kill cockroaches.

MANAGEMENT

Prevention and exclusion are the principal methods of controlling cigarette beetles in the home. Focus on identifying and destroying infested materials. In addition to the above-mentioned items, cigarette beetles also can be found infesting dried pet foods, old rodent baits, and flax tow stuffing in upholstered furniture. Thoroughly clean the area where the infestation was noted and apply an insecticide registered for in-home use into cracks and crevices. Exclusion is an important way of limiting the exposure of other commodities to infestation. Place pantry items in airtight hard plastic containers, including unopened items such as cake mixes, which can be infested without exhibiting outward signs of infestation.

WARNING

Pesticides are poisonous. Read and follow directions and safety precautions on labels. Handle carefully and store in original labeled containers out of the reach of children, pets, and livestock. Dispose of empty containers right away, in a safe manner and place. Do not contaminate forage, streams, or ponds.

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