

## CONFUSED FLOUR BEETLE

Coleoptera: Tenebrionidae, *Tribolium confusum*

By Eric Day

SIZE: About 1/8 inch (3-4mm).

COLOR: Reddish-brown.

DESCRIPTION: The confused flour beetle and the red flour beetle (*Tribolium castaneum*) are similar in appearance and habits. Adult confused flour beetles have the antennae gradually enlarged toward the tip; the antennae of the red flour beetle have the last three segments abruptly enlarged. *Tribolium confusum* cannot fly, but *Tribolium castaneum* may fly. The elongate, reddish-brown beetles are about 3-4mm long, with a distinct joint between the thorax and abdomen.

HABITAT: These beetles are very common pests infesting many flour mills, warehouses, and grocery stores. They also feed upon grain, beans, dried fruits, nuts, chocolate, and other foods in the house.



Confused flour beetle. Clemson University - USDA Cooperative Extension Slide Series. Bugwood.org.



Red flour beetle. Peggy Greb, USDA Agricultural Research Service. Bugwood.org

LIFE CYCLE: The adult female may live for as long as two years, depositing 300 to 400 eggs. The mature larva is brownish-white, has six legs, and is up to 13mm long. The life cycle requires one to four months when temperatures are favorable.

TYPE OF DAMAGE: Flour beetles attack milled grain products such as flour and cereals. These beetles often hitchhike into the house in infested flour and can build up into large populations on food accumulations in cabinet cracks and crevices and in furniture.

CONTROL: Control of these pests begins with the location of the infested food. A thorough clean up, using a vacuum cleaner to get into the cracks and crevices, will control this pest.

INTERESTING FACTS: Confused flour beetles are the most abundant and injurious insect pest of flour mills in the United States.