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VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

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INSECT NOTES

20th CENTURY CONTROL FOR FABRIC PESTS -- NUKE 'EM !

Carpet beetle and clothes moth attacks on wool fabric and clothing are most evident at this time of year. Aside from the fact that cold weather brings these clothing items out of the closet, fashion trends in the last few years have shown an increase use of natural fibers, such as wool and wool blends (can you tell that my daughter is a clothing and fashion major at Tech!).

Until about 10 years ago much of the wool produced in the United States was fairly well protected from attack by clothes moths and carpet beetles. To protection from certain parasitic insects, most of the wool-producing sheep in the U.S. were "dipped" in a low concentration of lindane. This chemical provided the animal protection against insect pests, and lindane bonded very well with the fleece. When sweaters, coats, skirts, etc. were made from the wool of these treated sheep, the lindane continued to provide protection. There was just enough lindane bonded to the wool to kill larvae of clothes moths and carpet beetles that attempted to feed on the cloth. [Lindane was also the active ingredient in head- and body-lice shampoo, and it acted to kill lice in about the same manner as it did moths and beetles.] Federal restrictions on the use of lindane eliminated it as a sheep dip about 10 years ago, and about that time problems with carpet beetles and clothes moths in wool products made in the U.S. began to increase. The built in protection was



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gone, people had to relearn methods of protecting wollens from insect attack!

The application of insecticides in the home, especially around clothing, is performed cautiously by homemakers. Protecting wollens from attack by insects is not easy, as insecticides may have to be applied to many areas of the house. The use of cedar chests and closets has been discussed in a recent issue of *Insect Notes*--so you are aware of the very limited effectiveness of this method of "protection" (?). The microwave oven sitting in the kitchen of many homes in the U.S. may be a safe, convenient, and effective method of controlling insects attacking wollens. A short time exposure in the microwave will kill fabric pests.

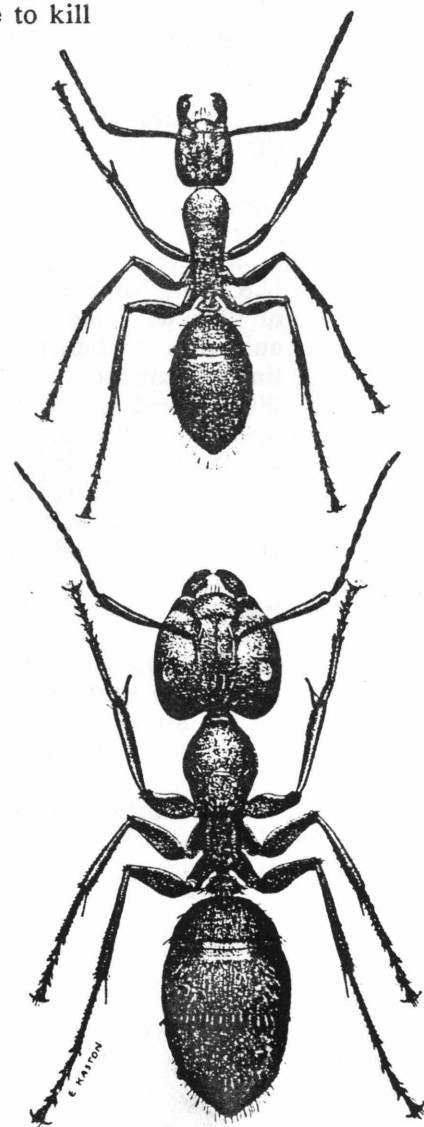
Methods. A standard microwave oven (producing 2450 MHz) can be used for fabric protection. For pieces less than 2 1/2 yards of fabric, an exposure of 4 minutes will kill adults, eggs, and larvae of cloths moths; and that same time period will probably be sufficient to kill carpet beetle eggs, larvae and adults.

When tested for colorfastness and color change, a 10 minute exposure was not detrimental to most fabrics. There may be a slight color change in some naturally dyed fabrics [pre mordanted with alum and dyed with onion skin, and pre mordanted with tin and dyed with marigolds and wild cherry--I suspect if you are into druid folk dances, you should be careful with what you nuke!] Microwave heating for 30 sec. to 10 minutes caused no change in the tensile strength in the wool tested wet or dry.

Conclusion. Microwave heating for 4 minutes will kill the insects often associated with wool fabric. No, you can't put the cat in the microwave to kill fleas--sorry!

THINGS TO REMEMBER FOR FEBRUARY

- [] *Carpenter ants* that begin foraging in houses in Feb. and March are an indication of an indoor nest. Look for moisture damaged wood in the house.
- [] Spraying firewood with an insecticide to control a few *wood roaches* or *beetles* is not advised. Knock the bark off logs before they are brought into the house--that should eliminate a lot of the unwanted house guests.
- [] *Cluster flies* will begin leaving their overwintering sites in late Feb. They will leave the house attic or walls and fly outside to lay eggs. So there might be an increase in the number of adult flies seen in the house (looking for a way out).
- [] This has been a mild winter (so far)--*boxelder bugs* have remained active nearly all winter. Spraying the masses of boxelder bugs around the house may help control next year. Just as effective would be removing leaf litter around the house.



TERMITE CONTROL - 1989

The chemical control of termites around structures will change little in 1989. The same chemicals will be available this year as were last year: pyrethroids and organophosphates.

Pyrethroids Demon TC - cypermethrin
Torpedo, Dragnet FT - permethrin
Tribute - fenvalerate

These products are nearly odorless, and they last as long as the organophosphates when applied according to the label.

Organophosphates Dursban TC - chlorpyrifos
Pryfon 6 - isofenphos

There may be a slight odor when these chemicals are used, but it does not persist and is not harmful. The odor associated with most insecticides is usually due to the chemical solvents and not the actual insecticide.

* **Remember** that these chemicals are expensive to the professional pest control operator. The cost of termite control for homes has increased substantially for both the professional applicator and the homeowner. If you encounter someone that is offering a very low price, be careful!--lower cost may mean they intend to use less chemical than the label directs, and the degree of control may be significantly less.

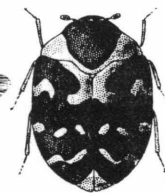
INSECT NOTES--PAST AND FUTURE

From time to time new (and old) Extension Agents will call and ask for a "complete set of Insect Notes" for their office. Wow! As much as we would like to be able to provide this service--we just can't. Insect Notes has been going for about 15 years--and that is a lot of copies to make. At best I can provide you with immediate back copies--maybe the last year or two.

Remember that Insect Notes is written strictly for Agents--there is no mailing list to outside agencies. Each County gets as many copies as they need up to five. You can **always** order additional copies for a meeting or group. I usually have about 50 extra copies run every month--if you can use 'em, just ask--we'll send 'em!



WEBBING
CLOTHES MOTH



VARIED
CARPET BEETLE

Fabric Pests

VIRGINIA PEST CONTROL ASSOCIATION

Homemakers that want to use the services of a professional pest control operator should consider contacting firms that belong to the Virginia Pest Control Association. Belonging to this association can help assure the homemaker that the company will have standards of training and safety, and be responsible in answering questions or complaints. Pest control companies that belong to the VPCA usually belong to the National Pest Control Association.

The address for the Va Pest Control Association is:

VPCA, P.O. Box 11745, Richmond, VA 23220

A directory of Association members is available to Extension Agents.

WINTER STONEFLIES

During normal (?) winters in Virginia we experience the emergence of several different insects. One of the most common insects to occur in the winter are winter *stoneflies* (Order - Plecoptera). Stoneflies are soft bodied insects with long antennae, two pair of long wings, and two tail-like appendages at the end of the abdomen. The immature stages of these insects are aquatic; they are often found under stones in streams (hence the name stoneflies) or along lake shores.

Some species of stoneflies emerge as adults, feed, and mate during winter months. The nymphs of these species are plant feeders, and the adults feed on algae. Winter stoneflies are sometimes attracted to houses, or they can swarm in large numbers in yards that are close to streams. They can be mistaken as pests, but are actually harmless. The adults do not bite or sting, and pose no threat to household infestation.

