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ENTOMOPHOBIA

INSECT NOTES

Who's afraid of insects? Well, almost everyone has some fear of insects, especially bees and wasps. Of course, a lot of people don't like cockroaches! Insect rank third in the list of animals most feared by man. Often, the fear of insects goes beyond what could be considered "normal" behavior--and this condition is termed entomophobia [entomo = insects; phobia = fear]. Entomophobia is defined as an unusual fear or dread of insects and closely related animals, such as spiders, ticks, and mites.

Entomophobia can be divided into two general categories: a general fear of insects, and delusory parasitosis. The first category, which is a true fear of insects, involves an irrational and persistent fear of insect infestations (usually indoors). Insects present in the house, though often harmless, become monsters of the bathroom and kitchen--or wherever they are found. Certainly, some insects will occur normally in the house, but these casual invaders should not cause a panic reaction. Excessive use of aerosol insecticides to rid the house of a few spiders or ants is unnecessary. The fear of insects should not be



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accompanied by excessive use of chemical or nonchemical control strategies.

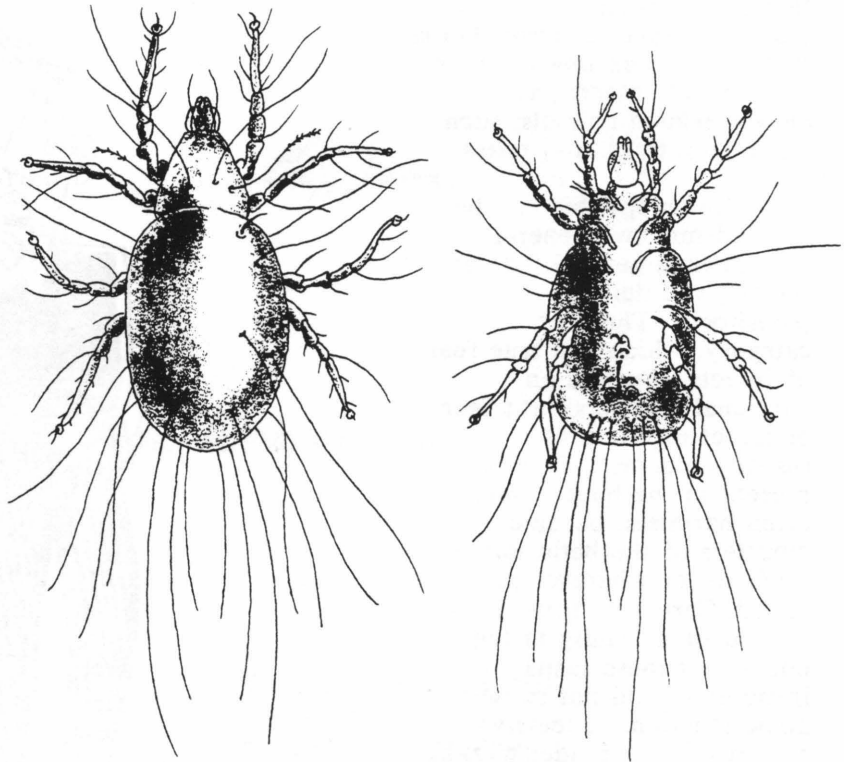
A more serious category of entomophobia is called delusory parasitosis in which a person imagines insect infestations--usually on their body! Persons suffering from this condition usually imagine insects (or mites) on their skin and biting them. Often, these people break out in a rash, and can show the "bites" produced by these imagined animals. The insects or mites they imagine biting them are usually too small to see with the unaided eye, hop or jump on and off their body, and these pests may be believed to originate from furniture, clothing, bedding, rugs, or sometimes from trees outside. These imagined pests are thought to have painful bites and produce welts on the skin. It is very difficult to discuss the possibility of delusory parasitosis with people--since they believe very strongly that there is some insect and mite involved in the problem. Of course, there are some insects and mites that are very small and can bite people. For example, scabies mites, chiggers, and bird mites are known to bite and produce a lasting rash in some cases.

FLOUR AND GRAIN MITES

Flour and grain mites are pale grayish white, wingless, soft-bodied animals (not insects). They are microscopic in size (about 1/50 of an inch long), and have many long hairs on their legs and back. Although small, they can be seen when they occur in large numbers--and they usually do occur in large numbers!

These mites are often found in stored grain, flour, and cereal products. They can begin as small infestations, but under favorable conditions they can increase in numbers rapidly. The mites may spread from infested flour to other areas of the kitchen or storage area. Flour or grain mites can complete their life cycle in about 2 weeks under warm and humid conditions.

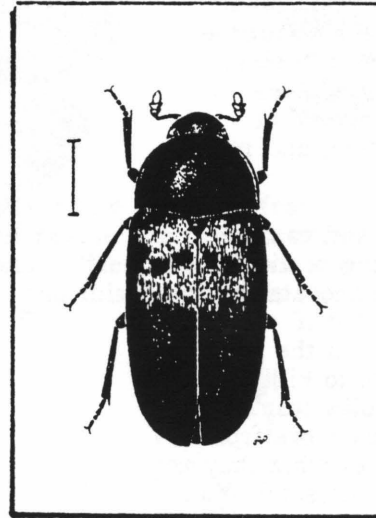
Control of these pests in the household kitchen begins with locating the infested material and removing it! Aerosol sprays can be used to spray areas adjacent to the infested food.



INSECTS IN CURED HAM

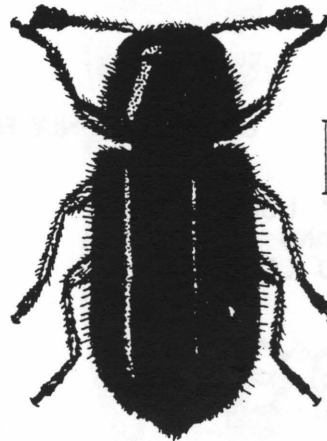
Larder Beetles. The adult larder beetle is about 1/3 inches long, dark brown, and with a pale-yellow band across the middle of the body. They are oval shaped, and the legs are usually hidden beneath the body. The larval stage of this beetle is longer than the adult, and very slender. It has numerous long hairs on the body.

The female beetle lays about 100 eggs on the food source (hams), or in the wrapping. The eggs hatch in about 12 days, and the larvae begin feeding near the surface of the ham--often tunneling deep in the ham. Larvae can become full grown in about 2 months; the pupal period requires about 3 weeks. The adults emerge and re-infest the ham--there can be several generations per year.



Red-legged Ham Beetle. This is the most destructive pest of cured hams, and other dried or smoked meats. The larvae do most of the damage by burrowing into the meat, especially in the fatty portions.

The adult beetles are blue-green, with the legs and the antennae reddish-brown--which is why they are called red-legged hame beetles. The beetles are about 1/4th inch long, with a distinct head and body region. The female deposits from 400 to 2000 eggs in the infested meat or in the wrapping close to the meat. The larvae hatch in 4-5 days and begin feeding. The larvae complete development in about 60 to 180 days (depending on temperature).

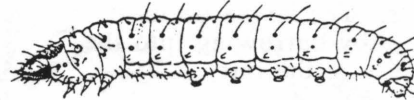
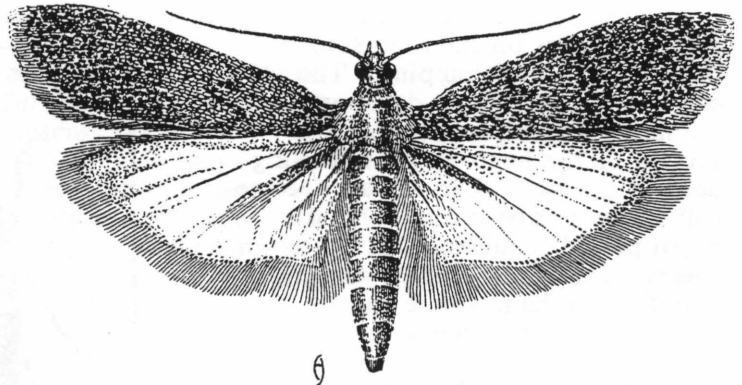


INDIAN MEAL MOTH

This is one of the most common household insect pests sent to us for identification and control recommendations. Perhaps during the winter months there are more requests than during the summer, but overall this is a popular pest. The caterpillars of this insect infest a variety of stored foods in the home, including flour, meal, dry pet food (a favorite of theirs), nuts, seeds, and all kinds of things in the kitchen pantry.

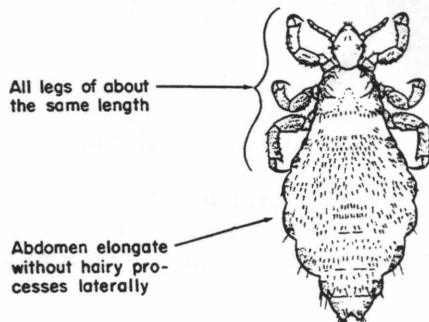
The adults are small, with the wings half dark brown and half pale gray in color. The caterpillars can be green to a pale pink. The caterpillars have the habit of wandering about the kitchen cabinet, walls, floor, ceiling, whatever--just before they pupate. It is during this wandering time that homeowners encounter them, and realize they have a problem.

Control is simple, and can be accomplished without using pesticides. Clean out the cabinets and locate the infested material. Discard it if possible. If not, "nuke it" in the microwave for a few min. to kill the eggs and larvae. [Most folks just discard the stuff, then buy more from the store--and many times what they get from the store is already infested! You can't win at this!]



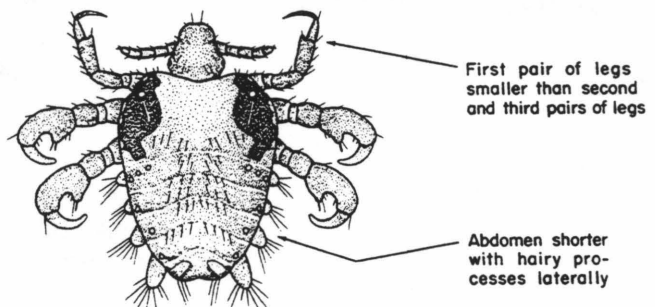
LICE COMMONLY FOUND ON MAN

BODY LOUSE AND HEAD LOUSE



*PEDICULUS
HUMANUS*

CRAB LOUSE



*PHTHIRUS
PUBIS*