



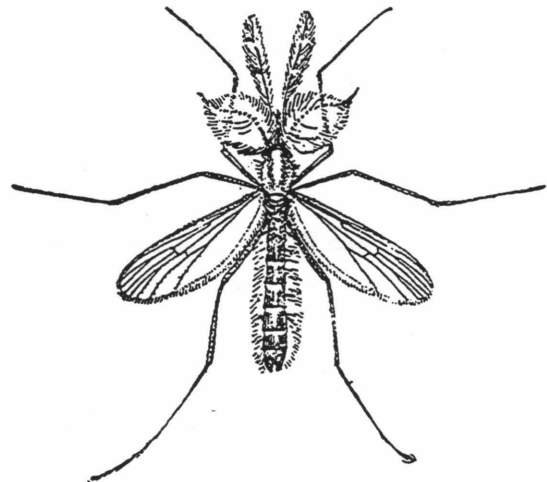
INSECT NOTES

No. 234
December 31, 1992

WARM-SPELL INSECTS

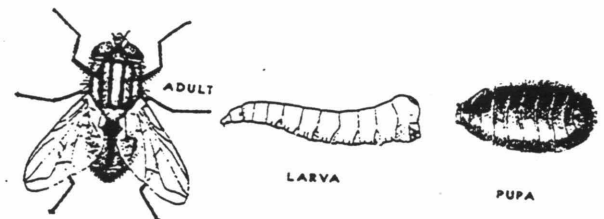
There are some insects that often become "active" during extended (3-4 days) warm periods in the winter months. While these insects are rarely household pests, homemakers may encounter them while outdoors, or these insects may gather on the sunny outside areas of the house or apartment. Let's review some of the most common "warm-spell" insects--just in case there are some clients with questions.

Midges and gnats. This group of flies is probably the most common insects found active during the winter, and maybe more so during warm spells. They are most often found during the day, when there is little wind, swarming close to the ground in shafts of sunlight. The swarms can be small (just 20-30 insects) or quite large--perhaps hundreds. These are mating swarms and they are composed of male and female flies looking to pair and lay eggs. The swarms may last just a few minutes or much longer. The majority of the gnats and midges that swarm in winter have immature stages that are aquatic. So, swarms are more likely in areas that are close to small streams, ponds, or lakes.



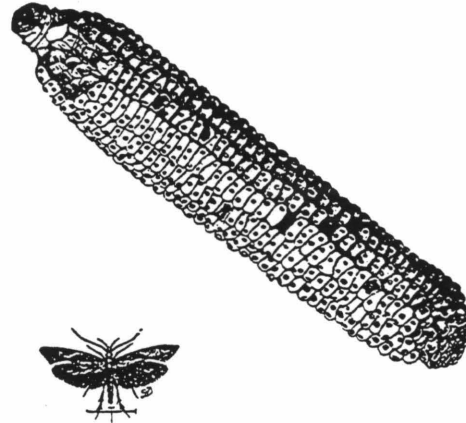
Green and blue bottle flies can become active during warm periods, and can gather on the sunny side of houses. The normal life cycle for these insects involves the females laying their eggs on decaying animal (primarily) and plant material. They usually spend the winter in the pupal stage, but warm temperatures can activate them and perhaps awaken some of the adults that are spending the winter in secluded areas.

House flies can spend the winter in nearly any stage--from adult to pupa. They can be active during all the cold months, and can be "extra" active during any warm spell. **Cluster flies** will begin leaving attics and wall voids in the next month--usually in February. But warm weather in January can stimulate the females to move outdoors and begin to search for egg-laying sites (earthworms).



ANGOUMOIS GRAIN MOTH

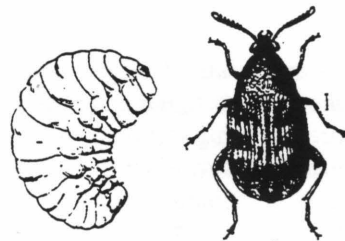
The Angoumois grain moth is a fairly common household insect--but a small one (about 1/4 inch long). The adults are gray to brown and have the habit of flying just a short distance before landing. While the adults may go unnoticed, the damage done by the immature stages can be easily seen. These are the insects that damage "Indian Corn"--the decorative stuff that can be used inside the house. The damage is in the form of numerous small holes in the kernels on the corn cob. The adults may stay close to the damaged corn, but fly away in a group when it is disturbed.



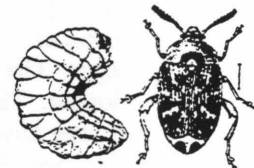
The freezer or microwave are the best methods for controlling this pest of Indian corn. Place the infested cobs in the freezer for about 5 days, or in the microwave for a few minutes. Both methods will kill the larvae with the corn. The adult moths in the house can be dispatched with a quick burst of an aerosol insecticide.

BETTER FOUND INDOORS IN WINTER. There are a variety of beetles that are common indoors during this time of year. Here are a few of them.

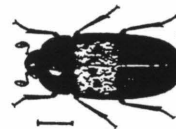
Bean Weevil - This insect infests stored beans used for food and for seed.



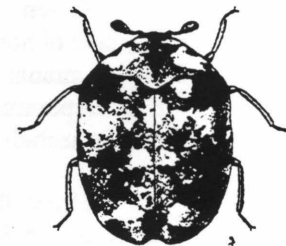
Pea Weevil - This beetle infests peas, and is closely related to the bean weevil.



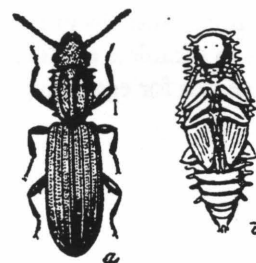
Larder Beetle - This small beetle infests stored, dry meat, especially cured hams.



Carpet Beetle - This insect is common indoors at this time of year. It infests a great variety of materials--from food to furs.



Sawtoothed Grain Beetle - Probably the most common pest of flour indoors.



INSECT NOTE:



SELECTING A PROFESSIONAL PEST CONTROL OPERATOR

Controlling some household and structural insect pests requires the services of a professional pest control operator. Treating the house for termites, powderpost beetles, and carpenter ants usually requires the use of specialized equipment, specific chemicals, and the experience to use them both. Often the control of household flea infestation requires the help of a professional. Selecting a professional pest control operator is sometimes difficult for homemakers, primarily because they are unfamiliar with this kind of service, and do not know how to judge a reputable company. Here are some suggestions on selecting the services of a professional pest control operator in Virginia.

First, some basic guidelines:

DON'T PANIC - If you suspect an infestation of insects, there is no need to be alarmed, and rush into control. Whether there are termites or powderpost beetles, waiting a few days or even a few months will not lead to instant collapse of your house! There is always enough time to think about it, and to get a second opinion.

DON'T BE RUSHED - Take your time in selecting a professional company to service your house. Don't be encouraged into "signing" because there is some bargain price available "right now". You will get what you pay for.

INVESTIGATE - You are buying a service for your home and/or property--consider the company very carefully. Be certain that you are dealing with a reliable firm, licensed to operate in Virginia, and with references available. Consider these aspects:

- Is the company a member of the Virginia Pest Control Assoc., and/or the National Pest Control Association? These associations provide regular conferences and training sessions for member companies.

- Is the company established in the community, do they have references of local people that you can call.

- Is the pest control serviceman or servicewoman "certified" by the Virginia Dept. of Agricultural and Consumer Services. Certification means that they have passed two or more tests on the safe use of pesticides. Certification is not necessary, but can indicate that the service person has been working in the pest control business for several years and has skills and experience.



Some other aspects of selecting a pest control company include:

READ THE CONTRACT. - The company will provide you with a contract that will outline the services. This will be provided by the sales person, but remember--the sales person will not be performing the work! Make sure you understand the contract, so that you can check the work performed by the serviceman or servicewoman.

KEEP THE CONTRACT. - Have the contract available when the service is performed, and keep it until you are certain all the work has been performed correctly.

YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR MIND. - There is a 3-day cooling off period in Virginia, and during that time you can change your mind about a contract.

If there are questions about a professional pest control company that is a member of the Va Pest Control Assoc. (VPCA), or to get information on companies that are members of the Association, the VPCA can be reached at:

Virginia Pest Control Association
11506 Allecingie Pky, Suite 1-D
Richmond, VA 23235

Telephone - 804/379-5258