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VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

**VIRGINIA
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No. 134

HOUSEHOLD FLEA PESTS

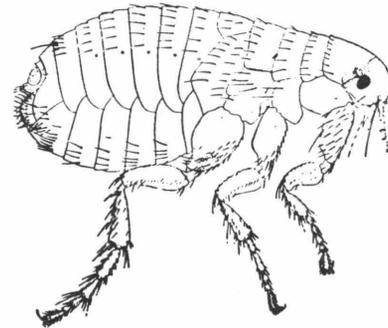
The unusually warm weather in October seems to have provided household fleas with an opportunity to continue reproducing. There have been reports of a resurgence of flea problems in late September and October -- just the time when the numbers of this pest should be declining! Homeowners frequently become desperate for an effective method of control for fleas on their pets and in the house. It is best that a veterinarian be consulted to treat fleas on pets. We can recommend control measures for the fleas in the carpet and furniture. Let's review some important facts:

- in general, total release aerosols (foggers) are not very effective in controlling household fleas;
- the best aerosol sprays are those that contain methoprene (PRECOR®); this material will help to control the larval stages of the flea (it is a growth regulator);
- if a homeowner has a professional pest control operator spray, ask that PRECOR® be added to the spray (it will cost extra);
- during warm weather a flea can develop from egg to adult in about 14 days;
- a female flea can lay about 10 eggs a day and can live about 14 days;
- a cat can support 300-400 fleas, young cats may have more fleas than older cats;
- a vacuum cleaner can be an effective flea control agent, but throw out the bag immediately.
- cold, dry weather will help reduce household flea populations -- there is always hope!

-- Robinson



INSECT NOTES



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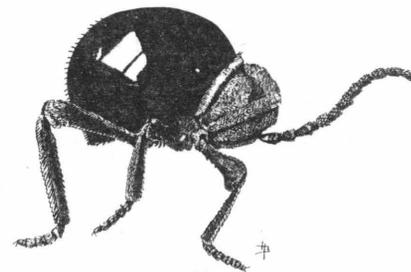
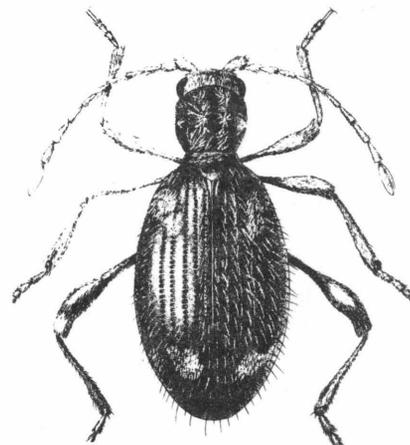
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SPIDER BEETLES

Spider beetles are small (1/16 - 3/16 in.) oval or cylindrical beetles. The abdomen is usually globe-like and the head appears small. They have long (spider-like!) legs.

Spider beetles are general scavengers that feed on a variety of foods including broken grain, grain products, seeds, dried fruits or meats, wood, hair, feathers, rodent droppings, and dead insects.

Control of these pests begins with sanitation and locating the source of the food they are utilizing. Chemical control may be necessary when infestations are heavy and throughout the house or building. An aerosol spray for household or "crawling insects" can be used in kitchen cabinets. However, be certain that the sprayed surface is dry before replacing food or dishes. -- Robinson

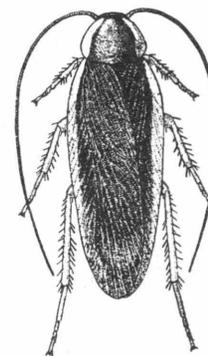


WOOD COCKROACH

Only a few of the thousands of species of cockroaches are pests in houses and buildings, most species live outdoors and are rarely seen by homeowners. The wood cockroach is one of the most common of the cockroaches that live outdoors. This species lives in litter and debris in woods. The adults are pale brown and are very capable flyers -- they frequently fly to outdoor lights at night.

Wood cockroaches are often found in houses in the fall season. The adults are active at this time, and can fly to lighted porches at night or come in with pieces of firewood. Wood cockroaches will not infest or occur in large numbers in houses (as do some other cockroaches). They are simply a casual or accidental invader -- similar to their close relatives the crickets and grasshoppers.

Control of wood cockroaches in a house can be completed with a fly swatter or a gentle nudge out the door. Rarely is there a need for chemical control. They do not infest houses. -- Robinson



FIREWOOD INSECTS

Sometimes you can stand close to a stack of firewood logs (hardwood or softwood) and hear the distinct sound of something (lots of things!) chewing. After a little prying away of the bark you can find lots of small to large insect larvae feeding just under the bark. Panic! The wood pile will be eaten in a week! They will infest the house! They will eat the house! Relax. None of that will happen.

There are a variety of insects that infest dead and down logs in the woods. These insects include: ants (especially carpenter ants), spiders, flies, wasps, bark beetles, and longhorned beetles. These insects can (and often do) remain once the logs are divided, hauled away, and stacked behind your house. The insects are no threat to the firewood, your house, or your health. So, it is not necessary (or advisable) to use any kind of insecticide on the wood pile.

Let's review some of the common firewood insect pests

Carpenter ants. Usually associated with softwoods (pine, spruce). Colonies may be formed in wood that is on the bottom of the pile, contacting the ground. They will not become established in the house if a few are accidentally brought in with a log.

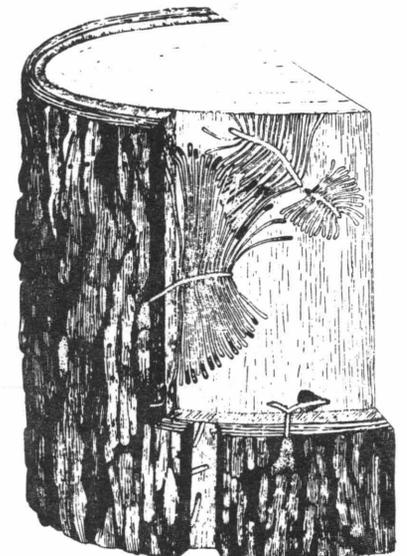
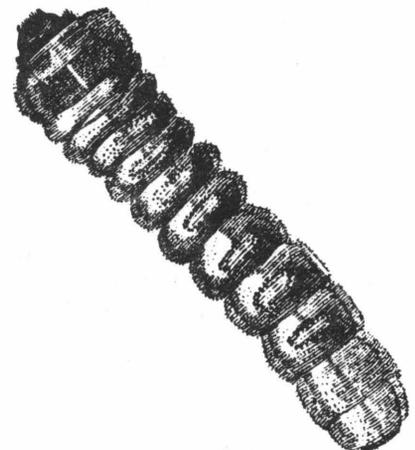
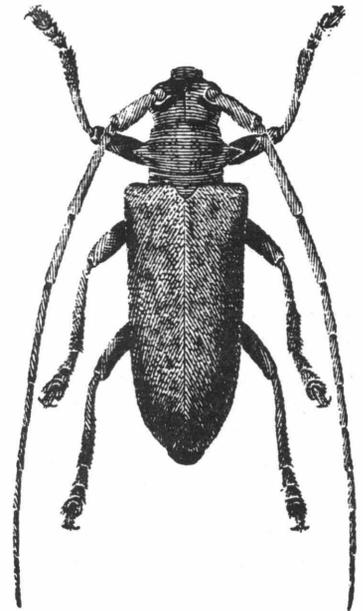
Spiders, wasps, flies. Often spend the winter hiding under bark outside. When brought inside and warmed up, these critters become active (don't we all!).

Bark beetles. Live in bark as larvae. The adults may emerge in great numbers in the house and collect (and die) at windows. They will not infest the house.

Longhorned beetles. Are often found under the bark or in the log. You can actually hear these fellows feeding and may find some of the "sawdust" they produce. The adults may emerge from firewood kept in the house for a long time. They will not infest the house -- trust me.

Now, for an insect that is not found in firewood -- the old house borer. This common pest of structural timber does not occur in firewood, and cannot infest houses from firewood. Termites rarely infest firewood -- unless you leave it in place for a long time (several years).

Control. Use an aerosol to kill insects that emerge from firewood and fly about the house. Strip the bark of firewood when you stack it or at least before you take it in the house. Rotate your wood pile, don't let bottom logs remain for more than a year.

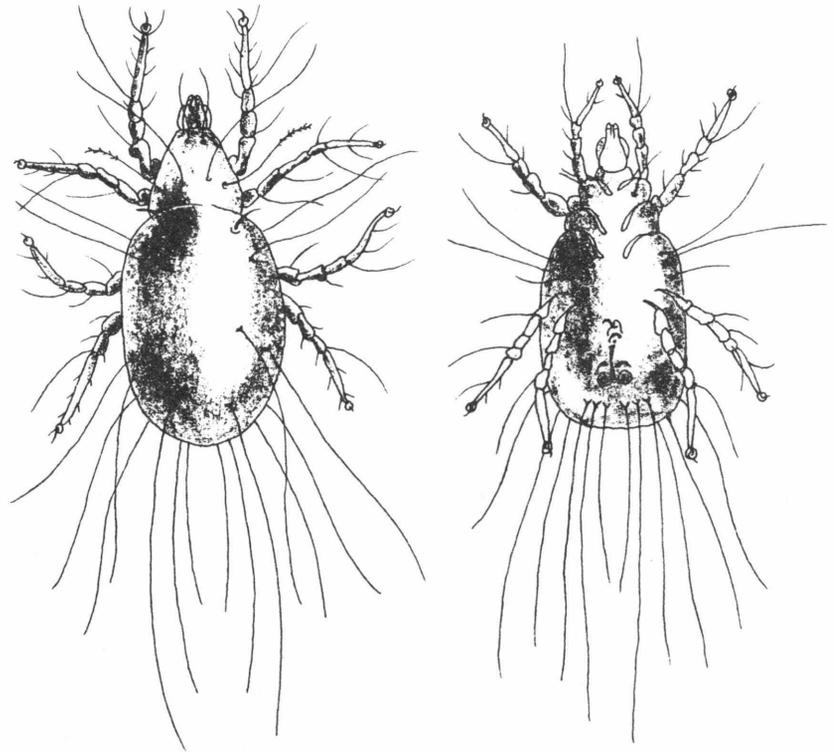


FLOUR OR GRAIN MITES

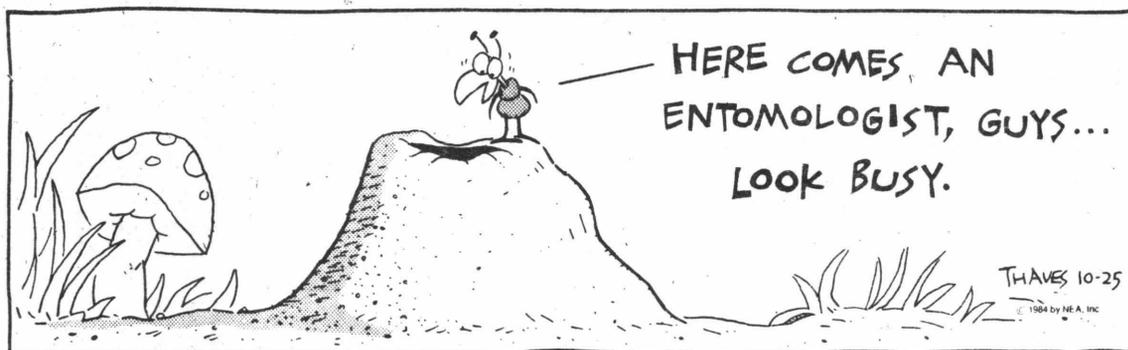
The flour or grain mites are pale, grayish white, wingless, softbodied animals (not really insects). They are microscopic in size and have many long hairs on the legs and back; The flour or grain mites are about 1/50 of an inch long -- much smaller than booklice.

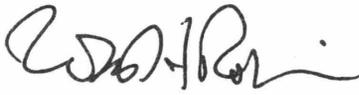
They are often found in stored grain, flour, and cereal products, and occasionally increase in numbers very rapidly. The mites may spread from the infested flour to other parts of the kitchen or storage area. Flour or grain mites can complete their life cycle in about 2 weeks under favorable conditions (warm and humid).

Control of this mite in the household kitchen begins with location of the infested material. Aerosol sprays can be used to treat areas adjacent to the food source. -- Robinson



FRANK AND ERNEST




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