

PestGazette

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Overwintering Pests

Don't let your home become a haven for unwanted pests this fall

Fall is the time of year when humans and animals alike begin to think about the harsh realities of winter. For insects, winter can be a challenging proposition and in some species, the thought is enough to drive them indoors for protection from the elements. It would be foolish to wait until temperatures have dropped dangerously low so these so-called overwintering pests need to secure their spot in the late summer to early fall. There are a variety of pests in this group including invasive species like the brown marmorated stink bug and multicolored Asian ladybeetle, and native species like box elder bugs

and cluster flies. Most overwintering pests make themselves known as they transition from the spring and summer environment to your home by massing in sometimes, though not always, staggering numbers on exterior walls. Typically, south and west facing walls are more likely to attract potential overwintering pests due to the accumulated warmth of sunshine throughout the day. If you suspect that you might have some of these pests getting ready to try to force their way in your home this fall, let us know and we will assess the situation and take care of the problem before it has a chance to begin. ■

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Don't Bring Pests Home for the Holidays

The holiday season can be a busy time for travel as many of us undergo long road trips, hotel stays, and public transportation to visit family and friends. Unfortunately, pests such as ants, cockroaches, and bed bugs also rely on these sites for food, shelter and transport. Here are some tips to help you avoid these pests while traveling so that leftovers are the only thing you bring back home this holiday season.

No road trip would be complete without plenty of snacks, drinks, and a couple fast-food pit stops. It doesn't take long before crumbs get dropped, drinks get spilled, and food wrappers start to pile up. While it may not seem like much, these minor spills can lead to serious pest problems if they

aren't addressed quickly. Scavenging insects like ants and cockroaches are highly attracted to food spills, and can easily find their way into any car overloaded with sacks. To avoid this problem, travel with a small cleaning kit stocked with items like moist towelettes and a mild cleaning solution so that you can clean up food spills as soon as possible. Also, dispose of empty food containers and other waste at every stop. Lastly, be sure to thoroughly check inside the vehicle for any missed crumbs or spills when you reach your destination.

Public locations such as hotels, bus stops, train stations and airports all receive heavy human traffic, making them high-risk sites for bed bugs.

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Avoiding Common Pantry Pests Is As Easy As One, Two, Three!

The term “pantry pest” is used to describe a handful of insects that commonly infest foods such as cereal, rice, flour and spices typically found in your kitchen pantry. Many of these pests are introduced into homes through already infested foods, but some can find their way in through improperly sealed windows or doors. Some of the most common pantry pests include the sawtoothed grain beetle, the rice weevil, and the Indianmeal moth.

Eliminating a pantry pest infestation can be challenging because these insects are small, often stay hidden, and they can reproduce quickly. In addition to being a nuisance, pantry pests can be downright costly. Each year, these insects are responsible for millions of dollars in food losses due to contamination or damage. Here are three things you can do to avoid pantry pests in your kitchen. ■

1.

Store dried foods properly. Pantry pests are experts at locating and infesting foods. Store dried goods in a glass or plastic container that has a tight-fitting lid to keep hungry insects out, and to contain any insects if a food source was already contaminated.

2.

Keep your pantry clean and organized. Just a few grains of rice can be enough to attract food-infesting insects into your pantry or cupboard. Once inside, pests can find plenty of places to hide and breed if the storage area is cluttered and disorganized. Clean and vacuum your pantry or cupboard regularly to remove any accumulated food debris. Also, purge old or empty items to reduce clutter and to eliminate possible harborage sites for hungry insects.

3.

Inspect your pantry regularly for pest activity. Pantry pests can be difficult to control, but spotting signs of an infestation early can make a big difference in how quickly a problem is resolved. Therefore, check food containers regularly for insects or signs of damage such as holes in packaging. If you notice anything out of the ordinary, contact us immediately so that we can diagnose the problem and eliminate the pests before they have a chance to spread.

Holidays (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

To avoid bed bugs at hotels, never put luggage, hand bags, jackets or other personal items on the bed or furniture until you have thoroughly inspected the room for any signs of bed bugs. Evidence can include cast skins, fecal stains and the bugs themselves. During your inspection, place your personal items in the bathroom until you have made sure the coast is clear. When visiting any public transportation sites, be mindful of benches or

similar places where people may regularly stop and rest. Try to avoid putting your personal items on these areas until they have been inspected. When you return home, be sure to thoroughly inspect your luggage and other items for evidence of pests. If you find any signs of a pest problem, call us immediately. We will make sure these unwanted hitchhikers do not spoil your holiday season. ■



Know Your Pantry Pests:

The Sawtooth Grain Beetle

The sawtoothed grain beetle can be found infesting foods in homes, grocery stores, and food processing facilities around the world. These beetles feed on a variety of products including flour, cereal, bread, pasta, dried fruits, nuts and dried meats. Their feeding activity not only damages goods, but the presence of sawtoothed grain beetles can also create favorable conditions that lead to mold growth.

Sawtooth grain beetles are small, brown, flightless beetles that measure only about 1/10th of an inch in length. They get their name from the characteristic sawtoothed projections lining either side of the thorax. Their tiny bodies are flattened, allowing adults to easily find their way into food packaging through small cracks and folds.

Sawtooth grain beetles live an average of 8-10 months. Females may lay over 250 eggs that can hatch in less than a week, and can reach adulthood in only a few months. Because of their fast development, sawtoothed grain beetles can produce multiple generations during the warm summer months.

Eliminating a sawtooth beetle infestation begins with identifying and eliminating the infested food source(s). Once infested items are discarded, the area should be thoroughly cleaned and vacuumed to remove any eggs, insects, and food debris. A thorough inspection should be conducted to ensure other items have not been infested. In some cases, chemical treatments may be necessary, and should only be completed by a licensed professional since most infestations occur in areas where food is stored and prepared.



Know Your Pantry Pests:

The Rice Weevil

The rice weevil is one of the most serious stored grain pests worldwide. Originally from India, this beetle has been spread globally through the commercial shipment of goods. Both the adults and larvae will attack wheat, corn, oats, nuts, beans, cereal and pasta. They prefer tropical and subtropical climates, but can thrive in nearly any region when they infest foods that are stored indoors.

Rice weevils are small, measuring only about 1/16th of an inch in length, and have a long slender snout that measures nearly 1/3rd of their body. Adults can vary in color, but are typically reddish-brown to black with four light yellow or reddish spots on their back. They are decent fliers, and are attracted to lights.

Adult rice weevils live an average of 4 to 5 months. Despite their short lifespan, rice weevil infestations can grow quickly, with females producing about 4 eggs per day that can mature to adulthood in as little as one month. When fully developed adults emerge from seeds or kernels, they leave

behind a single round hole that can indicate when an infestation is present.

The most important step in controlling this pest is to locate and address the source of the infestation. This can be challenging due to the broad range of items that may be infested

such as grains, pasta, bird seed, dry plant arrangements, decorative items containing dried foods, and even toys or beanbags stuffed with grain. The best preventative measure against rice weevils is to store goods in glass or plastic containers that have a tight-fitting lid.





Know Your Pantry Pests:

The Indianmeal Moth

The Indianmeal moth is considered one of the most important pests of stored food products in American homes. This moth gets its common name from the United States where it was regularly found infesting cornmeal made of maize or "Indian corn." Infestations often occur in homes when packages are brought inside that are unknowingly infested with eggs. Once adults emerge, they can quickly find and infest other foods.

Adult Indianmeal moths average just over a ½ inch long. Their wings are covered in tiny scales that create a unique color pattern which can be used to distinguish them from other moths. The lower two-thirds of their forewings are reddish brown, and the upper third is grey. Although, these wing scales can easily rub off making it hard to spot the color pattern on some adults.

The Indianmeal moth can complete its life cycle in as little as 30 days. Adults are typically short lived, surviving for no more than a few weeks. Over that short lifespan, adult females can lay as many as 400 eggs. Larvae spin large amounts of silk while feeding which accumulates fecal pellets, cast skins, and egg



shells. The silk and accumulated waste serves as evidence of Indianmeal moth activity.

Prevention is generally the best strategy to avoid Indianmeal moth problems. Any items that are likely to be infested should be carefully inspected for signs of activity before they are brought home. Proper sanitation and exclusion steps should also be taken to minimize the likelihood of an infestation. Lastly, keep storage areas clean and free of clutter, and store all food items in glass, metal or hard plastic containers with tight-fitting lids.

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"I don't think your sign will be enough. I'd hire a professional."



In late summer or early fall, pests like the multicolored Asian ladybeetle begin to seek harborage from cold winter temps. You may find them clustered on south-facing windows in your home. If you see them, give us a call and we will take care of the problem before it becomes too big.