

Regulation and Enforcement – Pest Control Service

Carpet Beetle Advice Leaflet

Carpet beetles are classified as *dermestid type* and can cause major damage to textiles or carpets. Therefore, this advice sheet aims to provide you with information on the following:

1. A description of the carpet beetle
2. The preferred habitat, life cycle and causes of carpet beetles
3. What can be done to prevent and treat for carpet beetles?



1. A description of the carpet beetle

There are several species of carpet beetle prevalent in the UK. The most common species are the varied carpet beetle and the furniture carpet beetle. In both species, adults are normally between 2-4mm in size, and have a varied pattern of white, brown, and yellow spots or scales on their back. Mature larvae are approximately 4-5mm in size, and have a series of dense tufts of bristles and hair located on each side of the rear end of the body. These bristles give rise to their common name of “woolly bears”.

2. The preferred habitat, life cycle and causes of carpet beetles

Carpet beetles are a major pest to textiles, with their success strongly attributed to central heating systems as these ensure stable temperatures, and wall-to-wall carpeting, which allows breeding to occur undisturbed. The continued success of industrial moth treatments removes the challenges presented by the moth to the carpet beetle.

A female carpet beetle normally lays approximately 40 eggs, which take just over two weeks to hatch. The larvae will live and feed for a period of 7-10 months. Following this, the larvae then turns to pupa and an adult beetle will emerge approximately one month later. Adults, however, will normally only live for a period of 2-6 weeks.

3. What can be done to prevent and treat for carpet beetles?

Larval forms of the carpet beetle can cause considerable damage to keratin-containing products such as wool, furs, leather, silk and dried animal remains. Occasionally, food products of animal origin will also be attacked, such as cereals and fibres.

Carpet beetles thrive in conditions where they remain undisturbed, for example beneath carpets, around skirting boards, and in wardrobes. However, they do not present significant health hazards, but they are potential vectors of anthrax. In some cases, larval hairs can cause skin irritations to those exposed to large numbers.

The wandering habits of these insects' means they frequently infest wide areas, making them difficult to control. To begin with, the source of infestation must be traced. This could be found in old nests, animal

remains, wool based lagging, soundproofing, wool base furnishings, or debris that has accumulated between floorboards. All sources of infestation should be removed and burnt where possible.

Insecticide treatment is vital where infestations are intensive. This will ensure that all larvae are killed.

When treating carpets and other valuable furnishings, it is important to carefully follow the instructions supplied with the insecticide.

REMEMBER: The Pest Control section can offer advice on dealing with and preventing infestations of carpet beetles. Telephone 0121 303 6007 for more information or email: publichealth@birmingham.gov.uk.