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Cigarette and Drugstore Beetles

These two small beetles have become common household pests. The adult beetles may be seen at various times of the year, often in early summer. They are good fliers and may accumulate on window or doorsills when they try to make their way out of doors.

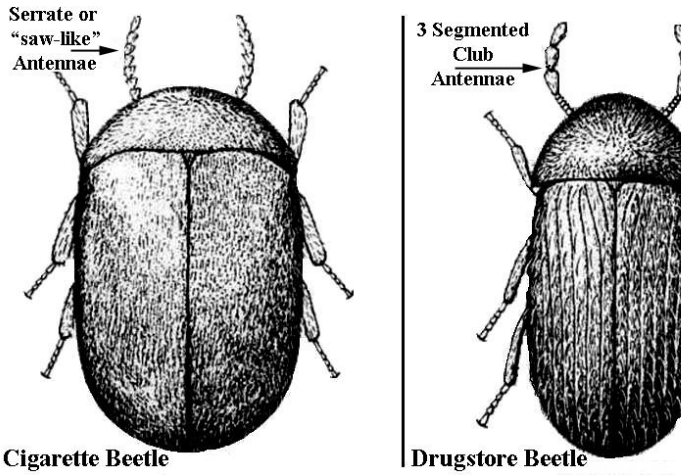

Fig. 1. A drawing illustrating the difference in the antennae of a cigarette and drugstore beetle (Drawing courtesy of *Drugstore Beetle, Stegobium paniceum (L). Insecta: Coleoptera: Anobiidae EENY – 228* B.J. Cabrera, Univ. of Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Service.)

Injury: Besides the nuisance factor of having beetles in the house, both species are considered stored food product pests. The cigarette beetle (*Lasioderma serricorne*) is destructive to cured leaf tobacco and tobacco products (especially those in storage) but also feeds on dried yeast cakes, seeds, dried botanical specimens, dried fish, leather goods and even tapestry and upholstered furniture. The drugstore beetle (*Stegobium paniceum*) feeds on almost anything of vegetable origin including a great variety of stored foods, seeds, breakfast cereals and the like. It gets its name from the habit of feeding on almost all drugs found in pharmacies. Both species are often found infesting herbs and spices in the home, especially those that have been left on the back of a shelf in storage for long periods of time. Condiments such as dried chili powder, hot peppers and celery seed are a few of the items in which they are found. Also, such items as dried flower arrangements or seed pictures may harbor an infestation.

Life History: The adult beetles live from 2 to 4 weeks and during this time the females may deposit as many as 100 eggs. The eggs are often laid singly in foodstuffs. The larval period usually ranges from four to five months, but under very favorable conditions the development from egg to adult may occur in 6 to 8 weeks. When the larvae are fully-grown, pupation occurs and they remain in this resting stage for 12 to 18 days. Here, in the Northeast, there is usually only one generation per year.

Description: The cigarette beetle (**Fig. 2**) and the drugstore beetle (**Fig. 3**) are very similar in appearance. Both are small, about 1/10 inch in length, reddish-brown oval-shaped beetles. The cigarette beetle has the head bent down at nearly right angles to the body giving it a humped back appearance when viewed from the side. The drugstore beetle has the head deflexed, but not quite as much as the cigarette beetles. To distinguish between the two species, you will need to look closely at the antennae (**Fig. 1.**) The drugstore beetle has a distinct three-segmented antennal club, while the cigarette beetle does not have a distinct club.

The larvae (**Fig. 2**) are about 1/6 inch long when full-grown, whitish in color with the head dark brown or tan. Larvae are found in foodstuffs.

Fig. 2. An adult cigarette beetle along with a pupa (left) and larva (right). (Photograph Clemson University - USDA Cooperative Extension Slide Series, www.Bugwood.org)

Fig. 3. A drugstore beetle. *Note the deflexed head that is typical of drugstore and cigarette beetles.* (Photograph Pest and Diseases Image Library, www.Bugwood.org)

Management Carefully examine all susceptible foods and articles in the kitchen, pantry, or other rooms where you find the beetles. Look for the beetles themselves and the fine powder they leave after having fed.

When the source of the infestation is found it should either be discarded or an effort made to eliminate the pests. In the case of a container of herbs or spice, discarding may be the most practical method of control. With a dried flower arrangement, it may be possible to use an insecticide to eliminate these insects.

In the closet or cupboard contents from nearby containers of susceptible products should be examined. If you are not sure of the status, transfer the contents to glass jars with tight-fitting tops. This is a good precaution because the eggs of the beetles, concealed in the product when the examination was made, may hatch later and lead to new infestations. Glass jars aid the viewer in periodic examination of the food.

Long storage of food products often ends with an infestation. If possible, products should be purchases in quantities suitable for early use, or adequate containers should be employed.

A household spray for crawling insects may be used to help control infestations of beetles accumulating on windowsills or doorsills. Removing and cleaning up the source of the infestation is the best way to avoid future infestations and keep these insects under control.

Reprinted from: *Cigarette and Drugstore Beetles*. Carolyn Klass, Senior Extension Associate, Department of Entomology, Cornell University. 6/83, revised 5/04

The Pesticide Management Education Program (PMEP), in cooperation with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), maintains a web site with a searchable database for pesticide products currently registered in New York State. Homeowners who have Internet access can locate currently registered products at http://pims.psur.cornell.edu/. Several different queries are available that will produce a summary for the product(s) that the system locates. If the system fails to locate the product in question, then that product is not currently registered in New York State. The database also provides a summary of important information related to every product currently registered. Two data fields "Status" and "Expiration Date" are provided in each summary. Products with a status of "Registered - Discontinued" are currently registered but will probably be discontinued for use, sale, and distribution in New York State after the date noted in the "Expiration Date" field.

This publication contains pesticide recommendations. Changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly and human errors are still possible. Some materials mentioned may no longer be available, and some uses may no longer be legal. All pesticides distributed, sold or applied in New York State must be registered with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Questions concerning the legality and/or registration status for pesticide use in New York State should be directed to the appropriate Cornell Cooperative Extension Specialist or your regional NYSDEC office. Read the label before applying any pesticide.

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