

Larder Beetle

A generally common pest species with a worldwide distribution. Larder Beetle (*Dermestes lardarius*) is now sporadic in the UK following improved food storage and preservation techniques. Adults occur year round throughout England and Wales but more rarely so in Scotland. In domestic premises they tend to occur continuously over several years due to the difficulty in finding and removing the food source and larvae.

Foodstuffs: The larvae develop typically in food which includes any animal by-products e.g. dried meats, fish, pet foods, skin and feathers, dead insects and sometimes high protein plant materials e.g. grains. such as dried dog food, furs, hides, and feathers. Another food source are dead insects such as cluster flies that become trapped in attic spaces and wall voids when they seek an overwintering site. Museum collections are vulnerable should numbers be allowed to increase.

Although the adults may be active throughout the year inside they may also overwinter outside in bark crevices, old nests and other sheltered situations, and during the summer occasionally in bird, bee, ant or wasp nests.

Identification: A medium sized beetle, 7-9.5mm is very distinctive and usually unmistakable due to its overall two-tone appearance; dark brown head and basal half to third of the elytra similarly brownish. A distinctive (middle-white) central creamish band on the upper wing cases almost always has 3 dark spots arranged in a broad triangular pattern on each. The larva is brownish and approximately 10-15mm in length. It is characterized by two curved spines on the last body segment. Like the adult, the larva is densely covered with hairs and as for other beetle larva, has three pairs of short legs.



Larder Beetle (*Dermestes lardarius*)
Adult and larva

Life Cycle

Adults: Become active in early spring, flying from overwintering quarters into buildings in search of host material, and will often lay eggs among accumulated dead insects or bird nests. The females oviposit through the spring and into the summer, each laying more than 100 eggs near or on a food source. Adults are long lived and in tropical areas or in good sheltered conditions they may be continuous breeders.

Eggs: Hatch after about 12 days

Larvae: Roam in order to find food, often living in cracks in floors or cupboards etc. or among accumulated dust or detritus in food storage situations. They feed continuously until the penultimate moult. Males moult 5 times and females 6 times. When mature the larvae are a little longer than the adults. They are voracious feeders and sometimes used by museums to strip remains from skeletons before presentation, they are also useful in forensics in establishing time of death.

Pupa: When ready to pupate larvae will bore into just about anything handy in order to form a secluded puparium, preferring the food source itself but also utilizing plaster, wood, fabrics, lead and even chewing through tin sheet. This stage is brief, from 3-7 days depending on temperature and moisture. Under good conditions the entire life cycle may take 6 or 7 weeks.

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Where are they found?



Larder beetles are typically found on animal-based material preferring animal by-products e.g. on dried meats, fish, pet foods, skin and feathers of dead animals etc.

Signs of larder beetle infestations are:

- adult beetles on windowsills indoors and on some flowers during the summer
- larvae and cast skins on vulnerable material
- debris in wood, plaster, paper etc as larvae burrow to create pupation sites.

Monitoring

Blunder traps such as the Museum Trap and Floor Trap will catch adults and larvae, and can give an indication of the severity of an infestation, and the species involved.

Sticky traps baited with a food attractant or the dermestid attractant will help catch male and female adults as well as larvae and can help pinpoint sources of an infestation.

Dermestid Attractant tablets are made up of a combination of multiple food attractants that have been tested both in the laboratory and in the field on dermestid beetles. The tablet will remain attractive for 1 year and will attract all dermestid species not just Larder Beetle.



Control strategies

Cleaning, inspection, and elimination of infested food sources are the first steps in controlling this pest but overall control usually involves several phases:

- removal of foodstuffs such as birds' nests from lofts, chimneys, eaves etc. Check for rodent activity and possible nesting indoors.
- rigorous cleaning of vulnerable areas such as vacuuming of edges of fitted carpets and under furniture. Prevent or remove any build up of dead insects.
- treatments of items can include 'deep freezing' of affected materials
- Apply residual insecticides around skirtings, inside storage cases or on shelving and in domestic situations inside wardrobes, drawer linings etc. Apply Constrain® to affected areas or apply Insectosec DE Powder to provide residual protection

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