

FACT SHEET

Carpet Beetles

Anthrenus Verbasci



The full name is "Variegated Carpet Beetle" which is an accurate description of the colourful white, pale yellow, brown and black scales which produce irregular patches on the outside shell of the insect. The adult beetle is about 1.5–4mm long and is completely harmless. It spends its life in the garden sipping nectar and pollen from flowers.

The adults can fly well and come indoors to lay their eggs on carpets and clothes etc. They are a serious pest in museums where they attack the fur of stuffed animals. One beetle can lay about 100 eggs and these hatch in 10–30 days. The damage is done by larvae that hatch from the eggs. These larvae spend several months eating any high protein food they can get – carpets, clothes, fur, bird's nests etc. The larvae are very distinctive, being covered in short bristles, giving rise to their common name of "Woolly Bears"

Fur Beetle (Attagenus Pelio)

The Fur Beetle, although a different species, causes similar damage. The adult is about the same size as the Carpet Beetle and also feeds on pollen and nectar from flowers. You will recognise it by the two white spots on its wing cases. The life cycle is almost the same as the Carpet Beetle, with the larvae spending up to 6 months eating carpets, clothes, fur etc. Like the larva of the Carpet Beetle the larva of the Fur Beetle is hairy, but it is much larger and has a long tail of silky hairs.

Treatment and Control



The first signs of an infestation are either seeing the larvae on the floor, or noticing holes appearing in carpets and clothes. Heavily infested material should be removed and destroyed. Infested areas should then be cleaned thoroughly using a hand held vacuum cleaner nozzle, concentrating on cracks and crevices. The vacuum cleaner bag should be removed and destroyed immediately on completion of the work. Infestation often starts from a bird's nest, so if it safe to do so, check lofts and attics to ensure birds are not nesting and remove any old nests.

The next stage is to have the area treated professionally with a residual insecticide. This will kill any remaining larvae or adults, and will also kill any larva that hatch in the course of the next few weeks. Of course it is worth noting where in the house the insects are initially found, as this may give some indication as to the type of flowers or bushes in the immediate vicinity that are an attractant.

