

# Controlling Pantry Pests

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Many different insects can be classified as pantry pests—insects that live on foods stored in the home. These insects infest products such as dried fruit, nutmeats, spices and any food made of cereal grains, such as bread, flour, cornmeal, macaroni or breakfast cereals.

## Where They Come From

Food in your cupboards may have been contaminated with insect eggs which were sealed in the package. When the eggs hatch, you can spot worms or insects in the food container. If you leave the package in the cupboard for a long time, the insects will escape and infest other foods and, eventually, the entire cupboard.

## Insects Preferring Humid Weather

You can expect specific and somewhat unique insect problems in hot, humid weather. A number of insects—springtails (collembola), booklice (Psocids) and fungus beetles (Coleoptera)—feed only on molds or fungi growing in the immediate vicinity. Controlling these pests with insecticides is usually futile. Instead, you should lower the relative humidity with dehumidifiers. These insects usually do not damage or destroy food, fiber or structures; they

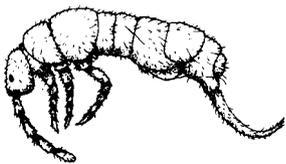
only contaminate food products, rendering them unfit for human consumption.

## Collembola (springtails or snow fleas)

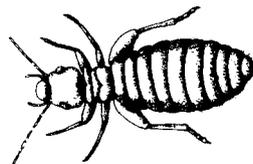
These are small, wingless, jumping insects. The long appendage on the abdomen is used as a “spring” for locomotion. Some species are chalky white, others are black. They are common pests in greenhouses, damp basements and storage rooms, where they feed on microscopic fungi growing on walls, boxes, pallets and around drains. They are frequently found living on decaying organic matter in potted houseplants. Allowing the soil surface to dry usually reduces their numbers.

## Psocids (booklice)

Some members of this group have wings, however, the common nuisance pest found in damp areas is wingless. It is a frequent pest in libraries, museums, warehouses, railroad cars and trucks. It also occurs in areas where dusty products are manufactured or processed, such as grain and flour mills, and dried milk processing plants. Booklice present no problem in a dry atmosphere, but populations develop rapidly during prolonged periods of humid weather.



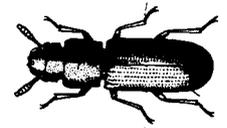
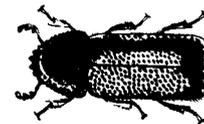
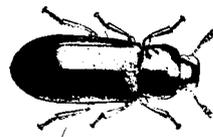
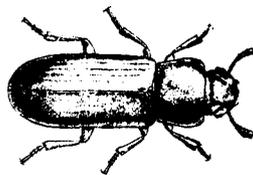
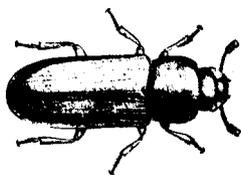
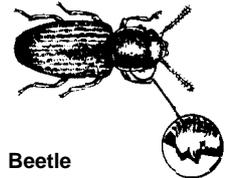
Collembola (Snow Flea)



Psocid (Booklouse)



Foreign and Flat Grain Beetle



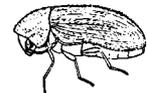
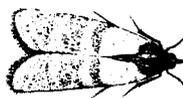
Red Flour Beetle

Confused Flour Beetle

Black Flour Beetle

Lesser Grain Borer

Long-headed Flour Beetle



Cigarette Beetle

European Grain Moth

Indian Meal Moth

Mediterranean Flour Moth

Drugstore Beetle



Dermestid Larva

Dermestid Beetle

Saw-toothed Grain Beetle Larva

Saw-toothed Grain Beetle

## Fungus beetles

Recognized by their small size, long antennae and the special projection on the front part of the thorax, these insects are found in damp or moldy grain or grain products.

Some of these beetles are quite small and are attracted to light. They can enter your kitchen through the screens if the windows are open and the kitchen light is left on.

## How to Control

The first step in controlling pantry pests is to locate the source of infestation. If all insects are confined to one package, simply destroying the infested package eliminates the problem. If you suspect insects have invaded other packages of food, place these packages in a freezer for several days. The cold will kill the pests, since they are tropical insects.

If you discover insects throughout the entire cupboard, more drastic action is necessary. First, remove all food containers. If practical, store them in their original packages in a refrigerator or freezer. Clean up all spilled foods and crumbs. Pay careful attention to cupboard corners, cracks and crevices, where eggs or larvae may be.

## Sprays Can Help

You can safely spray the cupboards with residual insecticides containing chemicals such as bendiocarb (Ficam), carbaryl (Sevin), diazinon (Knox Out or Spectracide), malathion, or propoxur (Baygon). These products are very effective when used according to manufacturer's directions on the label. Aerosol sprays containing the recommended chemicals are also available and effective when used according to manufacturer's directions.

You can buy these insecticides in most nursery or garden supply centers and in many supermarkets and hardware stores. Since they are sold under many different trade names, check the list of *active ingredients* on the label to

make sure the product contains one of the above chemicals recommended for controlling pantry pests. Also, make sure the product you buy is suitable for the places you plan to use it. Some products are designed for outdoor use and may leave an objectionable odor if used indoors. Insecticides containing knockdown sprays such as pyrethrins are designed to kill flying insects but only those hit with the spray. These products are not designed to control pantry pests.

**Follow label directions and precautions exactly.** You may replace food containers on the shelves as soon as the spray dries.

## Use Insecticides Safely

1. Check label directions and safety recommendations every time you use insecticides.
2. Keep insecticides in original labelled containers in a place secure from uninformed persons, children and animals.
3. Store in a place where insecticides cannot be accidentally mistaken for food or cleaning products.
4. Put away or cover carefully all foods, dishes and utensils before spraying.
5. Don't smoke, eat or drink when using insecticides.
6. Keep people and animals away from places being treated.
7. Avoid unnecessary exposure when using insecticides.
8. Wash hands and face thoroughly with soap and water after using insecticides.
9. Throw empty containers in the trash. Do not leave them where children or animals can come into contact with them.

**NOTE:** In case of accidental poisoning from insecticides, call your doctor immediately. Be sure to show the insecticide label to your doctor.

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