

# STORED FOOD PESTS

Of the 65 pests that infest stored food in Hawaii, only five are commonly found in household pantries. Infestations in homes are usually detected by the presence of adult beetles or moths in kitchens or pantries. These stored food pests are relatively small; beetles are 1/8 inch or less and moths are approximately 3/8-inch long.

## MAJOR PEST SPECIES

**The Cigarette Beetle** is the most common pest found in infested packaged food in homes. It is primarily a pest of tobacco, but it also attacks spices, dried fruit, grains, cereal products, seeds, books, leather, and upholstered furniture. This beetle infests the widest range of foods of all stored food pests. Eggs are laid on or near food and hatch in 5-10 days. The larvae are hairy and the pupae are hidden in silken cocoons covered with particles of the infested material. The life cycle is completed in 40-50 days.



**The Merchant Grain Beetle** attacks processed cereal products, nuts, coconut, and candy bars containing peanuts or puffed rice. Its flat body and small size enables this beetle to enter narrow cracks and crevices of food packages. Eggs, larvae, and pupae all occur in the infested material. The life cycle is completed in one month under optimum conditions.



**The Red Flour Beetle** infests stored grain and grain products, peas, beans, shelled butts, dried fruits, chocolate, drugs, and many other items. They are unable to feed on undamaged whole grain. Eggs, larvae, and pupae all occur in infested material. The life cycle is completed in one month under optimum conditions.

**The Indian Meal Moth** infests grain and grain products, dried fruits, seeds, crackers, biscuits, nuts, powdered milk, chocolate candy, red peppers, and dog food. Because the larvae leave webbing over the food material, it spoils more food than it consumes. Only eggs and immature larvae are found in infested material. The mature larvae usually leave and pupate away from the food source. The life cycle takes an average of one month.



**The Almond Moth** feeds on cereals, dried fruits, flour, grain, peanuts, seeds, and shelled nuts. Only eggs and immature larvae occur in infested material. The mature larvae usually leave and pupate away from the food source. The life cycle averages 81 days to complete.

## CONTROL METHODS

The only control method for pests in food products is to discard all infested materials. Vacuum shelves and cabinets to remove crawling insects. Use of insecticides is inadvisable because of the danger of residues on food for human and animal consumption. Salvaging lightly infested pet foods can be done by sealing packages in plastic bags and keeping them in the freezer for several days to kill the insects.

## PREVENTIVE CONTROL

All opened packages of food, particularly cereal products, should be kept in airtight plastic containers or sealed in plastic bags and kept in the refrigerator or freezer.

**CAUTION:** *Certain pesticides and their solvents may cause respiratory irritation. Persons with respiratory diseases should consult their physicians before using any pesticide. IT IS A VIOLATION OF FEDERAL LAW IF PESTICIDES ARE NOT APPLIED EXACTLY AS THE LABEL DIRECTS.*

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