



Lesser Mealworm Beetles, *Alphitobius diaperinus*

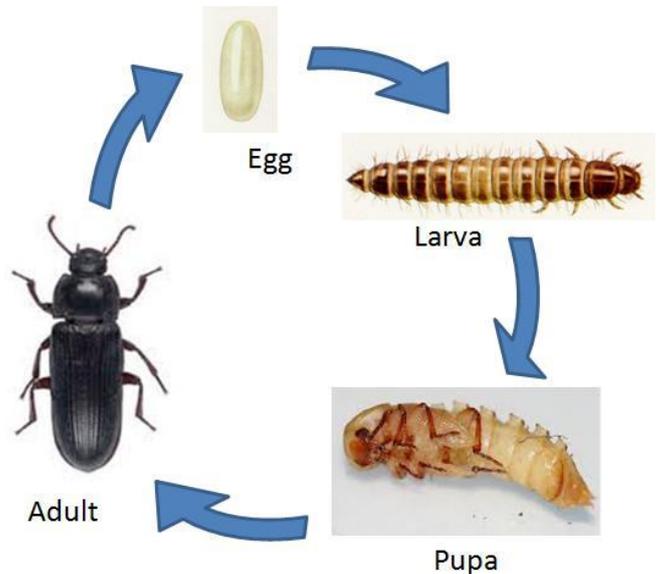
Description

Adult -- The adult is a black beetle between 5.5 and 6.7 mm long. The head and thorax are densely covered with tiny depressions. The wing covers have tiny depressions arranged in more or less parallel rows. Newly moulted adults are reddish-brown and slowly turn black.

Egg -- Lesser mealworm eggs are slender with rounded ends (1.5 mm long). The eggs are creamy white but darken with age.

Larva -- Lesser mealworms are slender, segmented, yellow / brown worm-like insects with three pairs of tiny legs on the thorax. Lesser mealworms grow to 7.5 mm long.

Pupa -- Lesser mealworm pupae are somewhat worm-like in appearance and are creamy white just after moulting (6 mm long). The pupae become tan-brown just before moulting to darkling beetle adults.



Life Cycle

In optimum conditions, the life cycle takes 4-6 weeks. In favourable conditions, the adult's life span is about one year and during this time the female lays 200 eggs.

In common with other insects, development times are influenced by temperature, relative humidity, moisture content, quantity and quality of food. The following figures are therefore only a guide. Development ceases in conditions of low humidity.

Significance

This beetle is mainly a pest of oil seeds and some cereal products. It is often recorded from whole grain, both in the tropics and the UK. It may occur in large numbers in grain with a high moisture content. Occasionally, it is recorded on dried fruit and cocoa beans. Its presence is indicative of damp storage conditions that allow mould growth. Beetles may be found in the open under piles of mouldy grass. It is also a common pest of poultry houses and piggeries, where it is sometimes referred to as the litter beetle.

In a domestic situation, bird or other animal nesting material may be the source

Control

Any infested foods should be destroyed. In the infested area cracks and crevices should be treated with a residual insecticide. There can be difficulties in controlling this pest.

Safety

If you intend to carry out your own treatment read the label of the insecticide container before you buy it to ensure it is suitable for lesser mealworm. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully when applying insecticide so that you do not cause harm to yourself or your furnishings.

If you require our further help please contact the Pest Control Service – details below.

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