



Psocids or 'Book Lice'



Psocids - or booklice are common and harmless household pests found in about one in three homes. They are typically between 1mm and 2mm long and often found in dry foods. They resemble grains of brown sugar. There are two main species:

- ***Trogium pulsatorium*** found most often in older slightly damp houses
- ***Liposcelis bostrychophila*** the predominant psocid pest of domestic kitchens in the UK.

They are not caused by poor hygiene, and are just as common in the cleanest of homes. They prefer to live in dark, warm, humid places – such as the folds of packaging in food cupboards, and dislike light or disturbance.

They feed on a wide variety of food products – such as flour and crumbs – and also the microscopic moulds that develop in humid conditions. They may live for about 6 months during which time the female may lay up to 100 eggs.

Conditions

Psocids prefer areas with high humidity but can tolerate dry conditions for some days. The kitchen environment is likely to provide the conditions they need and fitted cupboards provide the darkness that attracts them.

In warm conditions psocids can rapidly increase in number. This is most likely to occur during the summer months when temperatures are higher, leading to their discovery in the autumn.

Prevention of psocids in the home

To prevent psocids in the kitchen:

- Packets of food that have been opened should be used up quickly. Use airtight storage boxes, sealed bags and storage jars for foods.
- Food storage areas should be well ventilated and cool. If storage in cool ventilated cupboards is not possible, make sure that your cupboards are always free from condensation and damp.
- Regular cleaning of cupboards is advisable, since crevices of cupboards harbouring dry food can also provide a food supply for psocids. Use of a vacuum cleaner is recommended, provided the contents are then immediately disposed of in an outside dustbin. Do not use a very wet cloth since this may seal dry food into crevices, encourage humidity, and promote the growth of mould in chipboard.

Control of psocids in the home

Dispose of all visibly infested packages in an outside dustbin and thoroughly clean the cupboards using a vacuum cleaner paying particular attention to crevices. If psocids are found in other parts of the house, clean the area with a vacuum cleaner. Immediately after use, dispose of the cleaner contents in an outside dustbin.

It is important to make sure that when foodstuffs are replaced in cupboards that have been cleaned they do not reintroduce the psocids.

Containers and packaging may be treated by placing them in a deep freeze for 24 hours (enclosed in a plastic bag). This will kill any eggs or juveniles that might be hidden in the folds of packaging. As an extreme measure labels could be removed from tinned food, bottles and jars to ensure that no psocids are hiding behind the paper. If you do this remember to use a felt tipped pen to label the bare containers. The freezer treatment is also suitable for books and other objects which you might suspect of harbouring eggs/ individuals (enclose them in plastic bags).

It is generally recommended that you do not use an insecticide because of the danger of contaminating your food, however, as a last resort crawling insect powers can be used – remember, carefully read and follow the manufacturers instructions.

Complete eradication of psocids may not be practical, but with appropriate food storage and regular cleaning of cupboards their numbers can be kept very low. Since they do not bite humans or pets, do not cause damage, nor carry disease it may be that they can be tolerated.

Services from the Borough Council

The Borough Councils Pest Control officers can provide a chemical treatment to control psocids where all other options have been tried by households and have not worked.

- To request our help please call **01782 742590** during office hours or see our website.
- Our current charges are detailed on our website at www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk , or available by calling our Customer Services Team on 01782 742590
- Some landlords may pay this charge on your behalf if you live in rented accommodation.
- Our waiting times are typically 3-5 working days.

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