

Carpet Beetles

General Info:

Carpet beetles are one of the most common indoor pests in Utah. The carpet beetle's name is misleading because it was named when carpets were made of animal products such as wool, which these beetles would readily consume. Today, since carpets are largely synthetic, they are rarely pests of carpets. Carpet beetle larvae have many food sources, including stored food, food-based art projects, other dead insects, dead animals, rodent baits, shed hair, leather, fur, feathers, museum specimens, and occasionally cotton or linen. Because they live naturally outdoors, continuous introduction can occur during warmer months.

What do they look like?

Adult carpet beetles are about 1/8 inch in length and their colors can be highly variable (see Figs. 1 and 4-6 for examples). Larvae are elongate, with a red hue or light brown color. The larvae are somewhat hairy and can vary in size depending on the stage of larval development. When fully grown the larvae reach a size around 1/8 inch.

Life Cycle

Carpet beetles are usually brought indoors on infested items, such as flowers or food products. The female lays its eggs on suitable food items and when the eggs hatch larvae emerge and eat your susceptible items. Eggs hatch within 10-20 days. Carpet beetles can be long-lived if the proper conditions exist. Life cycles can take a year or more under favorable conditions.

Did You Know?

- 12 species of carpet beetles occurring in Utah homes have been identified by the Utah Plant Pest Diagnostic Lab.
- Adult carpet beetles are excellent fliers.
- Carpet beetle larvae can consume, destroy and contaminate food products.
- Some carpet beetle larvae have arrow-like hairs that can cause skin and throat irritation and allergy-related symptoms when consumed or contacted.
- Carpet beetle larvae prefer dark, isolated areas. Adults prefer sunlight and seek out pollen and nectar from flowers.



Above:
Figure 1. Adult varied carpet beetle
(Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University).



Middle:
Figure 2. Arrowlike
hairs on some carpet
beetle larvae (Insect and
Diseases Image Library,
Bugwood.org).



Right bottom:
Figure 3. Carpet beetle
larva (André
Karwath).





Above Left:
Figure 4. Black carpet beetle larva and adult (Clemson University).



Above Right:
Figure 5. Warehouse beetle larva and adult (Whitney Cranshaw, CSU, Bugwood.org).



Left:
Figure 6. Larder beetle adult (Joseph Burger, Bugwood.org).



Managing Carpet Beetles with Integrated Pest Management

- Use sticky traps to monitor window sills and food storage areas for the presence of adults, larvae, and shed skins.
- Keep doors and windows closed (unless screened) during spring, summer, and fall, when adult beetles can readily fly into buildings.
- Maintain screens, windows, door sweeps, etc., to exclude adult beetles.
- Store all food and susceptible animal-based products (wool throw rugs, etc.) in pest-proof containers, including food for pets in the classroom.
- Dispose of old art work that could serve as a food source (eg. macaroni, feathers).
- Search for and throw out carpet beetle-infested food, or other, items.
- Thoroughly vacuum and clean areas where hair and dead insects can accumulate, such as baseboards, in or under couches, behind shelves/furniture, near window sills, in AC/heating vents, lighting covers, etc.
- Because beetles live naturally outdoors, exercise moderate tolerance toward these pests when found in classrooms. If carpet beetles are infesting food in food storage areas, there is zero tolerance. Act immediately to eliminate food infestations.

In Utah, the warehouse beetle is a common pest of stored food items in homes, warehouse and food production buildings, and in schools. When inspecting for these pests, also be aware of other insect pests known as “pantry pests.”

Other food-infesting pantry pests that can be found in Utah, include:

- Indian meal moth
- Sawtooth grain beetles
- Confused and red flour beetles
- Cigarette and drugstore beetles
- Spider beetles
- Flat grain beetles

For more information on pantry pests, see our factsheet: <http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/factsheet/pantry-pest06.pdf>



For more info, check out:

Colorado State Univ: Carpet Beetles
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/05549.html>

UC Davis: Carpet Beetles
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7436.html>

Utah State Univ.: Carpet Beetles
<http://utahpests.usu.edu/htm/utah-pests-news/summer2011/carpet-hide-beetles/>

