

Several times over the last few weeks, I have been asked to identify an insect that has turned out to be the larval stage of a dermestid beetle, or carpet beetle. These insects are scavengers that develop on materials such as pet hair, dead insects, lint, woolen items, fur and feathers. Basically, they feed on many items that people provide in their homes. Some other types of dermestid feed on stored grains, causing issues in your pantry. Since the carpet beetle is found outdoors most of the time, it is vital in scavenging dead plant and animal materials, therefore they can be seen as beneficial. Of course, when they invade your home, they become a pest.

Carpet beetles are about 1/8 inch in length and have elytra-covered scales. Females can lay 100+ eggs, which hatch in 1-2 weeks into pale-colored larvae with spear-shaped setae. The larvae molt several times, and may stay in this stage for two months to a year. The grown larvae are nearly 1/4 inch long. The adults are good flyers and most household infestations occur when the adults fly indoors and find suitable food sources. Areas under carpets and along carpet edges, floor cracks, or under seldom moved furniture are sites where the beetle can get established.

If you find that you have carpet beetles, finding and eliminating their food sources are imperative. If you have an item that can't be destroyed, freeze or heat treatments may be warranted to eliminate the beetle. Calling a professional is a good idea with this pest, as they can be tricky to remove.

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