



Larder Beetle, *Dermestes lardarius*

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Description Adult larder beetles (Coleoptera: Dermestidae) are typically 1/3 inch (8 mm) long and roughly oval in shape. The antennae are clubbed and the body is densely covered with short hairs. The head and thorax are a dark brownish-black color. The top half of the elytra (the wing covers) are a light brownish-yellow with several dark spots on each side. The bottom of the elytra is a darker brownish-black color.



Adult larder beetle.
(Joseph Berger, Bugwood.org)



Larder beetle larvae. (Jim Moore
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Larder beetle larvae are grubs about 0.5 inches (13 mm) long. The body is covered in numerous long hairs and there are two downward curving spines at the end of the body. Larvae may appear somewhat striped with alternating dark and lighter bands circling the body.

Common Hosts Larder beetles feed on animal products with high protein contents, such as dried meats, cheese, dry pet food, and desiccated skins and hides. They are a nuisance in museums, where they damage taxidermy mounts and insect collections. Fur coats, wool rugs, and bird feathers can also serve as food for these insects. Sometimes larder beetles feed on stored grain and grain-based foods, especially if they are contaminated with dead insects. Larder beetles are also found in attics and wall voids where they live in the nests of birds, small mammals, and wasps, or on accumulations of dead insects that entered the home to overwinter.

Life Cycle The larder beetle has a complete life cycle with egg, larval, pupal, and adult stages. There may be several generations a year under ideal conditions of temperature and food supply.

Habitat/Distribution The larder beetle is a widespread pest of granaries, warehouses, and homes throughout much of the world. Larder beetles are also found in natural settings, where they perform an important role in “recycling” desiccated animal matter.

Damage Larder beetles contaminate stored products with their feces and cast exoskeletons. They can destroy museum specimens and valued items made from leather, horn, fur, and other animal products. Mature larvae can also cause structural damage by boring into wood and hard substrates when preparing to pupate.

Control Stored product pests like the larder beetle are best controlled through inspection and proper storage of food items. Regularly inspect stored products for signs of infestation such as the presence of beetle feces, cast skins, or insects. Also look for damaged grains and any signs of feeding activity. Remove and discard any products that show signs of infestation. Foods can also be heat-treated or placed in a freezer for several days to kill any living insects. Clean and vacuum shelving and the insides of cabinets. Place food materials in sealed containers to prevent beetles from getting into the food, or to limit the spread of an infestation in the event that food brought into the house is already infested.

Check attic spaces for bird and animal nests that might serve as a source for beetle infestations, and clean hot air registers and ductwork. Regular inspections and good housekeeping practices will limit any infestations and eliminate the need for chemical application against larder beetles.

Interesting Facts “Larder” is an older word meaning a room or cupboard used to store foods. The term once specifically meant a cool place where cured meats were kept before the widespread use of refrigerators and modern grocery stores.