



PANTRY PESTS – MOTHS IN THE KITCHEN

Insects that invade the pantry are a common problem. They destroy or spoil large amounts of food annually. Beetles and moths are the most common pantry pests. Food processing companies practice good quality control in their plants, but some packages do slip by inspectors. The pests' eggs are hidden in food packages and enter the home when purchased. Once in the home the eggs hatch and grow to adults and of course reproduce adding to the problem. The insects will spread from one food container to another.

The more commonly seen pantry insects are the cigarette beetle, drugstore beetle, larder beetle, sawtooth grain beetle, rice weevil, Indian meal moth, and several species of flour beetles. The pests are usually discovered in large numbers, either as small worm-like immature insects or caterpillars in a box of cereal or flour bag.

When you first discover the infestation immediately check other food packages. Examine food packages that contain dried fruit, meal, bird seed, flour, pasta, breakfast cereals, shelled nuts, and spices, especially chili powder, red pepper, and paprika. Unopened containers should also be checked because sometime the insects gain entry through tiny gaps in the packaging.

If the insects are isolated to the one package simply remove it and place it in the trash, outside the house. Whenever you notice adult insects flying about the kitchen or pantry then you must inspect all packages very carefully. Most likely you will find more than one contaminated package. All

infested food must be thrown away. Do not spray insecticides in the house. Vacuum all shelves, cabinets, and storage areas, then wash them with hot soapy water.

Prevention is the best control. Store food in containers that seal tight with a lid. “Tupperware” type plastic containers, metal canisters, and glass jars work well. Pantry insects can crawl under loose lids and some can even chew through plastic bags and cardboard. Keep food stored in a cool place or freeze if possible.

For more information I suggest the Maryland Cooperative Extension’s free publication, #HG67, “*Pantry Pests*” which you can download it from our website at the following link [Pantry Pests](#),

<http://www.hgic.umd.edu/media/documents/hg67.pdf>

For more information about horticulture or the Master Gardener Program in Frederick County, call the Frederick County Office of the Maryland Cooperative Extension, 301- 600-1596, or visit <http://www.frederick.umd.edu/>. Our mission is to educate Maryland residents about safe, effective and sustainable horticultural practices that build healthy gardens, landscapes and communities.