

Biscuit beetles(*Stegobium Paniceum*) are a member of the furniture beetle family and as such are very difficult to distinguish from *anobium punctatum* (the common furniture beetle). However, instead of their larvae feeding on wood they have adapted to feed on starch-containing foods.

They are 2-4mm long, reddish brown and have a loose three segmented antennae. Between 10-100 eggs will be laid and the life cycle can be completed in approx. 70 days at 28 degrees cent.

As the name suggests their preferred foods are –

- biscuits
- dried pet foods
- old dried bread
- breakfast cereals
- nuts
- dried fruits and seeds
- hard pastas
- dried-up dead rodents or birds and bird droppings plus
- numerous other foodstuffs.

The adult beetles fly very well and are usually found on windowsills after being attracted to the light. Due to their flying ability they can be found throughout the home but there is usually a central location where the infestation is located.

In our experience the following list contains some of the most common places for them to be found :-

- In kitchen cupboards infesting part used packets of numerous types of foodstuffs that are usually out-of-date and have been pushed to the back and forgotten about. (Dried pet foods are a particular favourite).
- Coming from the fireplace area where there is either a dead bird or some old dried-up bread lodged on the internal chimney shelves or simply behind the metal plate sealing the fire opening, behind the gas fire etc.
- Infesting the “rustic type” dried flower arrangements that contain large seed heads and ears of corn. If you look carefully at an infected arrangement you can see the tiny little holes from which the beetles have emerged, just like woodworm holes.
- Old birds nest in the roof-space.
- Dead rodents or rodent bait under floorboards or again in the roof-space.
- Ornamental types of pillows or soft toys filled with various types of cereal grains which beetles can infest. Buck-wheat pillows, which are sold to people with neck injuries/ailments are another source.
- Biscuits for either animal or human consumption that may have been hidden away by a pet or child in some unlikely location. Even in such places as a coat pocket hung out of the way in a wardrobe.

The first thing to do is try and find the exact location where the beetles are emerging from. There is usually one particular room or windowsill where you are finding the largest concentration of Beetles. If not, to help narrow down your search, you could systematically seal each room off after first removing any beetles you can find within that room. Try not to leave any doors open over night and then hopefully next day more beetles will have appeared in the room closest to the infestation.

Once found, any infested foodstuffs etc. can be disposed of (outside). You can then, using an aerosol spray of crawling insect killer, spray a band around the whole perimeter of the room where the skirting board meets the floor. Other areas such as windowsills and cupboards could also be treated after first checking the spray will not have an adverse effect on the materials you are spraying it onto.

If the beetles appear to be entering via the fireplace, then any debris should be removed from that area. It's worth noting that sometimes you have to place your arm up the chimney to remove any debris that may be lodged on the ledge just above the top of the fireback.

Beetles are able to find their way down from roof-space areas, where there may be an infested birds nest or dried carcass of some description, by entering via such places as bedroom air-vents, or through the tiny gap around the ceiling rose above the electric light or simply through any other gaps around the tops of window frames or in the ceiling. It could be helpful to apply double sided sticky tape to any suspected cracks or air vents and monitor these areas for beetles becoming stuck to the tape.

If suspected, any bird nests should be removed and an insect powder/ant powder applied to the surrounding area.

If they are infesting a dried flower arrangement and you don't want to throw the arrangement away, you could place the arrangement inside a plastic bag and put it into your freezer for two or three days, this will kill any beetles or larvae infesting it.

Insect sprays and powders can be obtained from any of the large d.i.y. stores, garden centres and numerous other outlets.