

(Family Dermestidae) *dermestes lardarius* & *dermestes haemorrhoidalis*

Larder Beetles (*dermestes lardarius*) are 7 to 9mm. In length, all black except for a whitish band with black flecks on its shoulders. They have short clubbed antennae and are an elongate oval shape.

Its cousin (*dermestes haemorrhoidalis*) is a similar size but dark brown/black in colour and lacking the white shoulder markings.

The adult beetles can fly very well, so it is not uncommon for them to simply fly into the home via an open window, usually during the warmer summer months when they are most active.

Once inside the home they will search out any food debris that may have accumulated in such places as under cookers, fridges, beneath skirting boards, even inside easy-chairs etc. where food debris has gone down the sides of cushions

If found in upper floors it could be due to a birds nest in the roof-space or a dead rodent under the floor, both of which the beetle larvae could feed on. Dermestes beetles are able to survive on the unlikely diet of hair, fur and feathers and are frequently found in bathrooms where they eat tiny particles of shed skin.

Good housekeeping is the key to their control if they are being found in kitchen areas. Any food debris should be removed and the areas thoroughly cleaned prior to the application of a residual insecticide (crawling insect spray).

The spray should be applied around all the edges of the affected rooms, holding the can about a foot away and applying a continuous band spraying the edges where the floor meets the skirting board. Make sure you check the label first to see if that particular spray is suitable for treating your type of flooring.

Do not use a spray containing the words lac or lacq in their name e.g. Insectlac, as these sprays contain lacquer and are sticky, smelly and may discolour certain items including plastics etc.

The tin should show either pictures or names of the various types of insect pests it is suitable for treating e.g. Ants, Beetles and other crawling insects. Do not buy Fly/wasp spray as these sprays have very poor or no residual activity (They do not leave a residue of insecticide).

Kicker boards beneath the kitchen units can be taken off and insect powder/ant powder applied to these out of the way areas. Powders are long lasting and will remain active for several months whereas most aerosol sprays have to be re-applied on a weekly basis until the problem has been solved.

You could, if preferred, pull the edges of the carpets back and apply the insect powder to these areas ensuring gaps under the skirting are treated but first remove any dust or debris before application.

It can take several weeks to eliminate the problem due to the beetles being in various stages of development. Before changing into their pupal stage the beetle larva have the ability to chew tunnels into various materials such as plaster and wood, inside which, they then pupate finally emerging as adult beetles.

It must be noted however, that even though they are able to chew into wood whilst in their larval stages, they are not classed as a wood pest as such.

During the colder winter months beetle activity can slow down or disappear altogether only to re-emerge once the temperatures increase in spring and summer.