



Foreign Grain Beetles Attack Newly-Constructed Homes

Karen M. Vail, Assistant Professor, Entomology and Plant Pathology

Foreign grain beetles, *Ahasverus advena* (Waltl), are small (1/12 inch), reddish-brown beetles that feed on molds and fungi. Contrary to their name, these beetles are not pantry pests (unless stored foods are moldy). Adult emergence may begin as early as the middle of July and continue through September. Foreign grain beetles look very similar to red or confused flour beetles, hairy fungus beetles or sawtoothed grain beetles, but can be distinguished from these species by the presence of a projecting rounded lobe on the front corners of the pronotum.



Figure 1. Foreign grain beetles can be distinguished from other species of similar appearance by the rounded lobes on the front corners of the pronotum

Because there are so many similar species, it is best to bring the suspect specimens to your local county Extension agent. They will forward the specimen to the Plant and Pest Diagnostic Lab in Nashville or to myself to confirm your diagnosis. Agents can also upload images through the Distance Clinic web site at <http://web.utk.edu/~extepp/diagnost.htm>.

Foreign grain beetles may appear in newly-constructed homes by the thousands. Typically, the female is attracted to poorly-seasoned lumber or wet plaster and wall board that supports fungal growth. Foreign grain beetles can also be associated with plumbing leaks, condensation problems, or poor ventilation. Eggs are laid on these materials as the

house is being built and larvae feed on the molds. In the late summer, adults become obvious when they emerge from the wall voids and are attracted to lights.

To control these beetles, wet wood and the moisture source should be eliminated. Adding ventilation such as air conditioners or fans may be needed to remove the moisture. Often, homes will dry out naturally in 1-4 years thereby eliminating the fungal food source and hence the beetles. Pyrethrin sprays can kill the adults, but need to be applied frequently as the beetles continue to emerge from wall voids. Vacuum cleaners work just as well as sprays to remove any visible beetles that are present. Pest control companies may be able to provide additional relief by locating the infested wall areas or source of dampness by using a moisture meter or by inspecting areas where the beetles are most abundant. A residual aerosol or dust can then be injecting into cracks and crevices along baseboards and into the wall voids. This may provide some relief; however, the beetles may still emerge from the baseboards and die on the floor.

If the homeowner can tolerate the beetles during the period when they are most active (late summer) the problem may resolve itself. Remember, foreign grain beetles are a nuisance by their mere presence, they do not bite or damage wood, fabric or stored food in sound condition.

Modified from:

Potter, M. 1997. FOREIGN GRAIN BEETLE. University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service. <http://www.uky.edu/Agriculture/Entomology/entfacts/struct/ef610.htm>

PRECAUTIONARY STATEMENT

To protect people and the environment, pesticides should be used safely. This is everyone's responsibility, especially the user. Read and follow label directions carefully before you buy, mix, apply, store, or dispose of a pesticide. According to laws regulating pesticides, they must be used only as directed by the label.

DISCLAIMER STATEMENT

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