

# Varied Carpet Beetle

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Coleoptera: Dermestidae

SIZE: About 1/4 inch (6.4mm)

COLOR: Dark with some colored marks on back



DESCRIPTION: The four most important and most common species are the black carpet beetle (*Attagenus mezatoma*) shown here, the varied carpet beetle (*Anthrenus verbasci*), the common carpet beetle (*Anthrenus scrophulariae*), and the furniture beetle (*Anthrenus flavipes*). The adults feed primarily on pollen and nectar and can be found on outdoor plants during the summer.

They are small, oval insects, usually less than 1/4 inch long. Carpet beetle larvae are usually about the size of the adult beetle, 1/4 inch or less in length. They have dense tufts of long setae (bristles) on their bodies. Black carpet beetle larvae have a long tuft of hair at the end of their bodies.

Adult carpet beetles are commonly found indoors at windows. Carpet beetle larvae often wander about the infested location-- from room to room in a house. This behavior results in spreading the infestation throughout the house.

LIFE CYCLE: All of these beetle species have a complete life cycle - egg, larva, pupa, and adult.

Adults can mate and reproduce without feeding. Females can lay from 30 to 100 eggs, depending on the species. Eggs are laid in lint, behind and under baseboards, in floor cracks, or other dark and protected locations. Eggs hatch in one to three weeks.

Larvae develop over a 3 to 36 month period and can molt (shed their skin) from 5 to 12 times. The pupal stage lasts 6 to 24 days, but the adult may take up to three weeks before it emerges.

TYPE OF DAMAGE: The larval stages cause damage to a variety of material. Their preferred food varies with the species, but all carpet beetle larvae can feed on wool carpets and other wool products, furs, hides, horns, feathers, hair, and silk. They will also feed on linen, cotton, and rayon if these fabrics are soiled with juice, food, or animal excreta.



They can be pests in cereals, stored grains, nuts, meal, Indian corn, red pepper, and similar products.

Carpet beetle larvae are frequently pests of insect collections and other museum specimens.

**CONTROL:** The best way to attack a carpet beetle problem is prevention! Vacuum regularly, do not store soiled fabrics (that is fabric that has been exposed to food spills), and use moth crystals or flakes when storing wool or other potential food of carpet beetles.



When an infestation has become established, it is necessary to locate as best possible the source of the infestation in the house. Check all potential food materials inside the house. Carpet beetles may be coming from an abandoned bird or bee/wasp nest or from a dead mouse or squirrel in a wall. Discard all infested material.

**INTERESTING FACTS:** The old skins are often mistaken for live larvae, and can give the impression of a larger infestation than really exists.