

PEST CONTROL ADVICE SHEET

BOOKLICE



WHAT ARE BOOKLICE?

Booklice are small, yellowish or greyish, soft bodied insects measuring between 1-6mm in length. They do not like the light, preferring to live in dark humid places such as the folds of packaging in food cupboards.

Booklice are often thought of as a pest that only infests food products. This is not the case and they can be found throughout domestic dwellings attacking a variety of materials including plaster, leather, woodwork and books. Materials of both plant and animal origin may be attacked, but preference is shown to those which are damp, where the booklice feed on the moulds and bacteria that develop.

Although booklice are harmless to man, they are often confused with body lice and are therefore regarded with alarm. The major problem posed by booklice is the nuisance they cause, as they can be present in large numbers throughout the home. They are not caused by poor hygiene; they are just as common in scrupulously clean homes as they are in the not-so-clean home.

WHAT CAUSES THEM?

Nobody, as yet, knows exactly what causes booklice, however they are always associated with high humidity. As suggested, they can be found throughout domestic premises, in fact anywhere where dampness is present. Dampness may result from new plaster work, condensation forming due to lack of ventilation (particularly in kitchens) or simply a leaking tap. Whatever the cause, this moisture will allow booklice to thrive.

WHAT TO DO IF A PROBLEM OCCURS

The first thing to do if you experience problems with booklice is to try and establish the extent of the infestation. Are the booklice restricted to a specific area or are they throughout the house? In cases where booklice are infesting large areas, contact the Council's Pest Control Service who can advise you further (address and telephone number at the end of this advice sheet).

If the insects are only affecting one particular place, for example a food cupboard, you may well be able to treat the problem yourself by following this advice:

- 1 Empty out the contents of the cupboard and inspect each item, paying particular attention to bagged dry foods, such as flour. Any infested goods should be thrown out.

- 2 Jars and tins are not normally attacked, but check that booklice are not behind the labels or around the screw tops of jars.
- 3 Once the cupboard has been emptied, sweep out any food spillage. If you do need to wash down a cupboard, ensure that it is thoroughly dried.
- 4 Use a good household insecticide and spray the cupboard. Make sure you spray all the cracks around the shelving etc as booklice will tend to collect there.
- 5 Allow the spray to dry fully and use the cupboard for the storage of non-food stuffs for at least a month.
- 6 If you still experience difficulties, contact the Council for further advice.

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT BOOKLICE INFESTATION?

- 1 Keep the house thoroughly aired and dried. Good ventilation is essential to deter the development of moulds on which the insects feed.
- 2 Always repair leaking pipework – another possible cause of dampness.
- 3 Always store dried foods in a cool and dry place, preferably in sealed containers.
- 4 Regularly inspect your home and treat any affected areas immediately. Don't be fooled into thinking "they will just go away" – they won't, and the problem will almost certainly get worse.

SAFETY ADVICE

When using insecticides, care should be taken not to spray near uncovered food. Insecticides should be stored in a cool and dry place where children cannot reach, and always wash your hands after using an insecticide.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about booklice or any other insect/rodent pests, please contact the Council's Pest Control Service:

Environment and Public Protection
Environment, Culture and Communities Department
Bracknell Forest Council
Time Square
Market Street
Bracknell
RG12 1JD

Tel No: 01344 352000