# Psocids (Booklice)

(Order Psocodea – *Liposcelis* spp. and others)

*Booklouse (greatly enlarged)*

**Identification** – Psocids, pronounced “SO-sid” because the P is silent, are better known as booklice. They’re tiny, usually under 1/16 inch, soft-bodied and pale gray, tan or almost see-through, with a big head, long thin antennae and usually no wings. You’ll notice them as specks that move, running in quick, jerky bursts across a window sill, a vanity or a book. Ignore the word “lice”: they aren’t parasites, and they don’t bite people or pets the way head or body lice do.

**Why they’re a problem** – For most homes, they aren’t much of one. Psocids don’t bite or sting and don’t spread disease. They feed on mold and mildew, so they’re a sign of moisture. Museums and libraries take them seriously, because booklice feed on the paste and mold in old books and can damage pages and bindings. For homeowners, the bigger issue is that people mistake them for bed bugs, mites or termites.

**What we find** – Psocids live wherever mildew and mold grow on damp or wet wood. That’s why they’re so common in mulch beds and under wood piles, and why, when they do come inside, they usually show up at window sills where moisture has gotten into the wood or the wood is damaged. We also find them in bathrooms, where wood or particle-board vanities get wet and start to rot. Otherwise, they’re rarely seen indoors. They also migrate in heavy rains, and some Junes, after a wet stretch, Ashburn and Aldie homes have psocids out in force on siding, patios and porches.

**What works** – **Fix the moisture.** Psocids depend on moist, wet wood and the mold growing on it, so the real fix is finding the wet or rotting wood and drying it out or replacing it. Treating inside window sills has helped in some homes, but there’s no guarantee with psocids, because they depend so much on the weather. An exterior treatment around the foundation knocks down the ones coming in from the mulch.

**What you can do** – Check for wet or damaged wood around window sills, under bathroom vanities and anywhere water collects, and fix leaks, sweating pipes and dripping AC lines. Wood or particle board that has gotten wet and started to rot should be replaced, and mold and mildew should be cleaned up where you find them. Outside, keep mulch, leaves and debris pulled back from the foundation, and fix low spots where water puddles, because psocids thrive in those areas and then move indoors in heavy rains. If you get a surge on the outside of the house after rain, just brush or wash them off; they clear out in a week or so as things dry.

**When to call Dynamic** – Give us a call if they keep coming back after you’ve fixed the moisture, or if you’re not sure whether they’re bed bugs, mites or termites. If you’re not sure it’s a psocid, send us a photo and we’ll identify it for you.