

Carpet Beetles

(Varied Carpet Beetle – *Anthrenus verbasci*; Black Carpet Beetle – *Attagenus* spp.)



Varied carpet beetle adult



Larva (scale marks are 1 mm apart)



Adults feeding on pollen outdoors

Identification – Adults are tiny, round to oval beetles about 1/8 inch long, shaped a bit like a miniature ladybug. The varied carpet beetle, the one we see most, is mottled white, brown and yellow; the black carpet beetle is solid dark brown to black and a little longer. The larvae are what most people find: small, fuzzy, tan to brown “worms” covered in bristly hairs, often with a tuft of longer hairs at the tail. They shed their skins as they grow, and people often mistake the empty skins for live bugs.

Why they’re a problem – The adults are harmless. They live outdoors, feed on pollen and usually just fly in a window or door. The larvae are scavengers that feed on lint, pet hair, dead insects and crumbs, and they can damage wool, fur, feathers, felt and other animal-fiber items. They don’t bite, but their bristles can irritate skin and feel like bites. Carpet beetle larvae are the number one thing people mistake for bed bugs.

What we find – Carpet beetles are one of the most common beetles in Virginia. Adults turn up on window sills in spring, coming in through cracks around windows and doors, or riding in on cut flowers. Outdoors they live in bird, wasp and rodent nests around the house. Indoors, larvae hide in dark, undisturbed spots: along carpet edges and baseboards, under furniture, in closets and stored woolens, in heat ducts and behind the washer and dryer where lint and pet hair collect.

What works – Clean out what they eat, then keep them out. Thorough vacuuming does most of the work. Our exterior treatment reduces the beetles coming in, and we can treat carpet edges, cracks and window frames where we find them. But a treatment kills the ones that are there; it doesn’t stop new ones flying in from outside. That’s why sealing cracks, fixing windows that don’t close right and keeping screens in good shape matter so much. Carpet beetles take patience and persistence.

What you can do – Vacuum thoroughly along baseboards and carpet edges, under furniture and beds, and in closets and heat registers, and empty the vacuum outside right away. Clean the lint from behind the washer and dryer, and keep pet hair and bedding cleaned up. Clean wool and other animal-fiber items before storing them in sealed containers, and check stored furs, feathers, rugs and mounted animals for larvae and shed skins. Finally, seal cracks around windows and doors, repair screens, and remove old nests from the house.

When to call Dynamic – Give us a call if you keep finding larvae, if you see damage to clothes, rugs or furniture, or if someone is getting itchy and you’re worried about bed bugs. If you’re not sure it’s a carpet beetle, send us a photo and we’ll identify it for you.