

Controlling Nuisance Weevils

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Most insects encountered indoors do not breed inside but have either flown or crawled in from outside. A number of species of weevils seek the shelter of buildings in large numbers during the summer and fall. These are harmless creatures that do no damage and do not bite, but their presence in large numbers creates a nuisance. These migrations are often an annual frustration. Taking steps to physically build them out by screening, sealing or blocking entry points before they get inside is the most important step to reducing the problem. None of these species will breed indoors.

Woodland weevils

There are four species of exotic weevils that feed on the roots of various plants in wooded areas. The adults can emerge in large numbers and can become a nuisance. Homes can be up to 100 yards from wooded areas and still have a problem. Most weevils are active at night and often can be found crawling on the outside of homes. They are slow moving and can often 'play dead' if disturbed. This group includes the European snout weevil *Phyllobius oblongus*.



European snout weevil



The imported green weevil *Polydrusus sericus*,

The small (2mm) brown *Barypeithes pellicus* .



And the small grey *Trachyploeus aristatus*



Black Vine Weevil-

Are 3/8 inch dull black weevils with lighter colored yellow hairs. These weevils breed on the roots of Yews, vines, and other foundation and landscape plants. Adults emerge at night during June and do some feeding on landscape plants before seeking shelter in homes and buildings. Black vine weevils are slow moving and often play dead if disturbed. The number of adults found indoors is usually small and is best handled with physical removal rather than with sprays.



Plant damaging populations can be controlled by treating the soil under the plants with insecticides or parasitic nematodes. Treatments should be applied during mid June as the new generation adults emerge but before they lay eggs. An interesting fact is all black vine weevils are females.

Strawberry root weevils-

Are all black, 1/4 inch and look like a smaller version of the black vine weevil. The grubs of this insect feed on the roots of a variety of plants including pine, spruce, strawberries, white cedar and many other plants. Slow moving adult weevils will be found crawling on ceilings during mid to late summer. Check around foundation walls and vents for access points. Weevils found indoors can be swept, vacuumed or removed by hand.



Imported Longhorn weevils-

Are 1/4 inch, gray slow moving weevils with L-shaped antennae that invade homes during June- August. Most problems are seen in rural areas surround by old grassy fields and long grass pastures. The larvae of these insects are root feeders on various grassy plants. Adults will do some feeding on plant leaves, but the biggest problem are the large number of migrating adults that move indoors. Land use changes such as development of the land in the area will affect populations.



Physical controls

The best defense for any of these problems is to prevent access- or "pest-proof" your home. If done correctly it will give you a long term solution and be less expensive than annual insecticide treatments. If you solve the riddle of how these creatures are getting inside you will have gone a long way in eliminating problems. If insects are only a problem in one area of the building, it usually signals what area of the structure contains the main entry point.

Make sure door sweeps are installed at the base of exterior doors and fit tightly.

All cracks in siding, should be repaired to prevent entry. All openings around door and window frames, siding, and especially soffits need to be caulked or sealed. Any opening and insect can squeeze into will give allow them to filter into the home. Even energy efficient new construction often have small openings that allow access.

A VERY COMMON WEAK POINT is the meeting of foundation and siding in a building. This is often a site where insects can crawl under and get access o the basement or wall voids. Caulk or stuff material in this juncture to prevent this problem.

Check roof vents, ventilators and vent fans, for screening that is small enough to exclude most insects.

Seal utility opening where pipes and wires enter the foundation or siding. Holes can be plugged with caulk, cement, expandable foam, steel wool, copper mesh or other products.

If insects are indoors you can sweep or use a vacuum to capture and dispose of them. Insects that have gained access to wall and attics will search for openings in ceiling fixtures, around window casings and electrical outlets as a way of getting into the living space. Sealing or taping these openings can reduce the nuisance problem but dead insects in wall voids can be a source of carpet and larder beetles that will feed on the high protein bodies.

Chemical controls.

Barrier treatments are exterior insecticide applications that are designed to kill the insects before they gain access. To be successful they need to be in place before the invasion is in full swing. The base of all doors and window should be treated. Apply materials to a 2-6 foot wide band along the soil around the foundation and 2-3 feet up the foundation wall. Sprays work well on surfaces. Granular insecticides or sprays can be used for ground treatments. Cool fall temperature make many insecticides perform poorly. Synthetic pyrethroids insecticides such as permethrin, bifenthrin, demethrin, cypermethrin, lamdacyhalothrin, esfenvalerate or cyfluthrin are preferred because they are effective at low temperatures

For some nuisance problems such as millipedes and imported longhorned weevils it is better to place the barrier at the edge of the property adjacent to the area the creatures are migrating from. Granular insecticides give a longer residual and can be placed in a 6-10 ft. wide swath. This strategy gives better results because it kills before the insects can get indoors. Many insecticides take two - four hours to work, and if the barriers are too close to the structure the insects can still crawl in and die and require a clean up.

Professional pest control companies have a larger number of chemicals and formulations to use than the homeowner and technicians should have a good understanding of the problem. For most nuisance insects, timing is critical and best control is achieved before the insects get inside. Most problems can be controlled with one properly timed application so there is not a need to get involved in a long-term contract. Many companies also will help pest-proof the home for a fee.

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