

Spider Beetles



Spider Beetles are small beetles belonging to the family Ptinidae. They are called spider beetles because they look somewhat like small spiders (or large mites) due to their long legs and relatively large, rounded abdomens. Ptinids are not common pests but can become numerous in certain situations. They are general scavengers and can be found in pantries, museums, grain mills, warehouses, and attics that contain bird, rodent, or bat droppings.

The American spider Beetles adult is from 1.5 to 3.5 millimeters in length and has a dark reddish-brown to black, shiny, globular abdomen. The head, thorax, legs, and antennae are covered with hairs that are a pale yellow to cream color. The white marked spider Beetles adults is from 2 to 4.3 millimeters long and are light brown in color with patches of white hairs on the wing covers. However, the white patches are frequently rubbed off of older beetles. Males have a thinner and more elongated abdomen than the females.

The shiny spider Beetles adult is similar in shape and color to the American spider beetles. However, the head, thorax, legs, and antennae are the same color as the abdomen. This species, more than the other spider beetles, resembles a large, reddish mite. The larvae of all three species are “C” shaped and cream colored with light brown heads. The length is dependent on the age of the larvae but can reach 3.5 to 4 millimeters.



The three species discussed have similar life histories and have been reported to feed and reproduce on a wide variety of foodstuffs, including almonds, animal skins, beans, books, bones, brushes, cacao, cereals, chocolate powder, corn meal, dates, dead insects and insect collections, dried fruits, dried mushrooms, dried soup, drugs derived from powdered leaves, excrement (dried), feathers, figs, fish meal, flour, ginger, grains, hair, herbarium specimens, hops, leather, maize, nutmeg, old wood in houses, paprika, rye bread, rye, seeds, silk, stuffed birds, textile fabrics, various spices, wheat, and wool.



Spider beetles prefer to forage at night or in dark locations and are consequently seldom seen. They also prefer damp locations and will readily feed on foodstuffs spoiled by moisture. They can be found within walls and attics, in the cracks of wooden floors in granaries, bakeries, and such, and in the nests of birds and rodents. They can be active at temperatures below freezing and will have from one to two generations per year depending on the ambient temperature and relative humidity.