



RED FLOUR BEETLE

INFORMATION SHEET



Dealing with a red flour beetle infestation can be incredibly frustrating and stressful. These tiny pests can quickly invade your pantry, contaminating flour, grains, and other stored food items. The sight of them crawling around your kitchen can be unsettling, and the effort required to eliminate them often feels overwhelming. It's not just about cleaning up the visible mess; it's about ensuring that every nook and cranny is thoroughly inspected and treated to prevent a recurrence. The persistence and resilience of these beetles can make the process seem never-ending, adding to the frustration and inconvenience.



The **red flour beetle**, *Tribolium castaneum*, is one of the most common beetles infesting stored products in homes. The larvae and adults feed on grain and grain products, peas, beans, shelled nuts, dried fruit, spices, milk chocolate, and even dead insects.

The red beetles are found inside of processed grain products like flour or meal, and feed less on whole grains. The beetles are not toxic or venomous and not known to transmit disease. They do produce a foul-smelling odor when present in high numbers.

HOUSEHOLD TIPS

- ✓ Store all milled grain and starches in airtight containers to prevent beetles from accessing the food source.
- ✓ Inspect pantries regularly for pest activity, checking for any signs of beetles or damage.
- ✓ Clean up spilled flour and food products to eliminate potential food sources.
- ✓ Throw away infested packages, vacuum pantry and cabinet shelves, and store new food products in sealed containers to prevent new infestations.
- ✓ Consider using insecticides in cracks and crevices as a last step if needed



TDA Biosecurity Enforcement inspecting Pecan Hulls for Red Flour Beetles in El Paso County

RED FLOUR BEETLE PREVENTION



◀ Weather seal the bottoms of doors. Caulk all cracks around windows and gaps in entry/exit holes in exterior walls for appliances and plumbing



◀ Put fine mesh screen on roof vents, attic vents, soffit vents, and any under home access points. (Beetles can enter the attic and "crawl space" to then make their way into living spaces.) Conventional window screen will not prevent the small beetles from getting through, so purchase screen with a finer mesh.



◀ A pyrethroid insecticide barrier spray can be applied to exterior parts of the house to provide some repellent effect. In addition to some repellency, beetles that contact the insecticide will die, but probably live long enough to make entry. Most pyrethroid insecticides will provide at least 30 days of control when applied to the exterior of a house. (Pyrethrins, the organic alternative to pyrethroids, break down very quickly in sunlight and are not a good choice for exterior insect control.)



◀ It is not necessary to treat large areas of carpets or floors, just spray corners and floor/wall junctions where the beetles naturally accumulate.



◀ Do not use insecticides in food preparation areas, and always read and follow the insecticide label.



◀ Only use insecticides labeled for indoor use. Pyrethroid insecticides are explained [here](#).

◀ A vacuum cleaner can be used to remove live or dead beetles but change bags frequently because the beetles have a foul odor.



◀ Low-level infestations of red flour beetle can be monitored with pheromone (chemical attractant) traps. [Trece.com](https://www.trece.com) sells Storgard Dome kits with red flour beetle pheromone for this purpose. These traps will not control the beetles, they are meant to allow their detection at low numbers.



An increased influx of red flour beetles from outside the home might cause a longer running infestation. Routine household infestations of red flour beetle and other stored product pests are common, and more helpful information to combat them can be found [here](#).