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Insect Infestations

- [Control of Insect Infestations](#)

Pests of Stored Dry Grains and Legumes

Insect infestations can occur in a wide variety of foodstuffs such as flours, meals, pastas, dried fruits and vegetables, nuts, sweets, whole grains, beans, sugars, TVP, jerky, bird seed and pet foods.

Naturally, the best way to deal with an insect infestation is not to have one in the first place. Try to purchase from suppliers who are clean and have a high volume of turnover of their products. This will mean the products you purchase will be unlikely to have bugs in them.

When you buy such foodstuffs examine them closely to be sure they are insect free. Check for any packaging or "use by" dates to insure their freshness. Don't shake the package, most adult insects will be found in the top couple of inches of the product and shaking the package will mix them into the contents and disguise them. If the package does turn out to be infested, return it for replacement.

Once you have purchased the product you should store it in an air- and moisture-tight container so it cannot be invaded after you have brought it home. With sufficient time, adult and some larval insect forms can penetrate paper,

cardboard and thin plastic packaging. Your containers should be either heavy plastic, glass or metal with tight fitting lids. As with everything in food storage, you should use older packages before newer ones and opened packages before unopened ones.



The storage area should be kept clean. Don't allow grain, flour, beans, bits of pasta or other food particles to accumulate on shelves or the floor. Cracks and crevices should be sealed or otherwise blocked. Unless it is a sticky spill, vacuuming is the best method of cleaning since cleaning with soap and water can wash food particles into the cracks.

Insects may get their start in chairs, sofas and carpets where food is dropped and not cleaned up. Don't forget to replace the filter bag on the vacuum since some insects can survive and reproduce in the bag after they've been sucked into it.

Bags of dry pet food and bird seed can also harbor insect infestation. Decorative foodstuffs such as ears of colorful indian corn, colored beans and hard squashes can carry insects that can infest your edible food. Even poison baits can harbor flour beetles.

Control of Insect Infestations

Should you find that in spite of buying fresh products and using careful packaging techniques you have an insect infestation you can try some of the following steps:

1. If the food is too heavily infested to try to save then it should be disposed of as soon as possible. Don't leave it in the kitchen or food storage area any longer than necessary so it won't infest other foods.



2. Large bugs can be sifted or winnowed out if it's not too heavily infested and you want to try to save it. Then treat it by placing into a deep freezer

at 0 F for three to seven days depending upon the size of the package. Refrigerator freezers usually do not freeze low enough to effectively kill all of the life stages of insects, but if left there, will slow their development. If freezing is not workable then the product could be spread on baking sheets and heated to 150 F for fifteen to twenty minutes, cooled and repackaged. Heat treated foods should be consumed shortly thereafter.

3. The surface areas where the food *containers* are stored can be treated with an insecticide. This is not a replacement for clean storage habits and good containers, but it can supplement it. This will not control insect infestations already in your stored foods.

Spray the shelf surface with 0.5% chlorpyrifos (Dursban), 1% propoxur (Baygon), 0.5 percent diazinon, or 0.25 percent resmethrin. You can find any of these in the hardware store in ready to apply packages. If a sprayer isn't feasible then they can be applied with a paint brush. Allow the solution to dry thoroughly. Cover the shelves with clean, untreated shelf paper and put properly packaged foods back on shelves. **READ THE PRODUCT LABEL FOR SAFETY INFORMATION CONCERNING CHILDREN AND PETS.**

Household bleach, Lysol and other sterilizers will not control insect infestation, though they can be used for mold, mildew and algae.

You may continue to find some insects after the cleanup is finished. This could be for several reasons. The first being they escaped from the packages they were infesting and did not get cleaned up. There may be more packages infested than were originally realized or, there may be hiding places in the storage area that need attention. Once you have carefully eliminated all food sources, the bugs should disappear in three to four weeks.

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