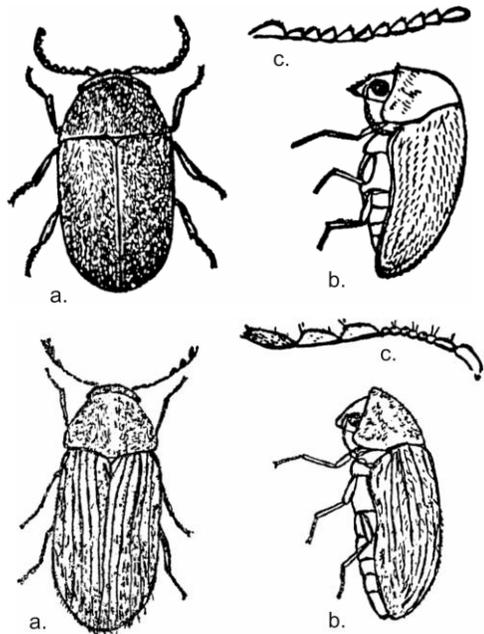




# Cigarette and Drugstore Beetles

Family: Anobiidae



Top: Cigarette beetle

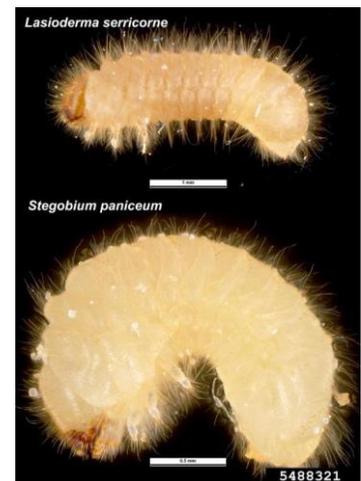
Below: Drugstore beetle

a. top view, b. side view, c. antenna

Drugstore beetles (ruler divisions are 1/16 inch or about 2 mm). Photo © 2013 by IDL.



Larvae of the two species  
(Pest & Diseases Image Library, Australia; <http://bugwood.org>)



## Injury

These two small beetles have become common household pests. The adult beetles may be seen at various times of the year, often in early summer. They are good fliers and may accumulate on window or doorsills when they try to make their way outdoors. Besides the nuisance factor of having beetles in the house, both species are considered stored food product pests.

The cigarette beetle (*Lasioderma serricorne*) is destructive to cured leaf tobacco and tobacco products (especially those in storage), but also feeds on dried yeast cakes, seeds, dried botanical specimens, dried fish, leather goods, and even tapestry and upholstered furniture.

The drugstore beetle (*Stegobium paniceum*) feeds on almost anything of vegetable origin, including a great variety of stored foods, seeds, breakfast cereals and the like. It gets its name from the habit of feeding on almost all drugs found in pharmacies.

Both species are often found infesting herbs and spices in the home, especially those that have been left on the back of a shelf in storage for long periods of time. Condiments such as dried chili powder, hot peppers, and celery seed are a few of the items in which they are found. Also, such items as dried flower arrangements or seed pictures may harbor an infestation.

## Description

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The cigarette beetle and the drugstore beetle are very similar in appearance. Both are small, about 1/10 inch in length, reddish-brown oval-shaped beetles. The cigarette beetle has the head bent down at nearly right angles to the body, giving it a hump-backed appearance when viewed from the side. The drugstore beetle has the head deflexed, but not quite as much as the cigarette beetle. To distinguish between the two species, you will need to look closely at the antennae. The drugstore beetle has a distinct three-segmented antennal club, while the cigarette beetle does not have a distinct club.

The larvae are about 1/6 inch long when full-grown, whitish in color, with the head dark brown or tan. Larvae are found in foodstuffs.

## Life History

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The adult beetles live from 2 to 4 weeks, and during this time the females may deposit as many as 100 eggs. The eggs are often laid singly in foodstuffs. The larval period usually ranges from four to five months, but under very favorable conditions the development from egg to adult may occur in 6 to 8 weeks. When the larvae are fully-grown, pupation occurs and they remain in this resting stage for 12 to 18 days. In the Northeast, there is usually only one generation per year.

## Management

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Carefully examine all susceptible foods and articles in the kitchen, pantry, or other rooms where you find the beetles. Look for the beetles themselves, and the fine powder they leave after having fed.

When the source of the infestation is found, it should either be discarded or an effort made to eliminate the pests. In the case of a container of herbs or spice, discarding may be the most practical method of control. With a dried flower arrangement, it may be possible to use an insecticide to eliminate these insects.

In the closet or cupboard, contents from nearby containers of susceptible products should be examined. If you are not sure of the status, transfer the contents to glass jars with tight-fitting tops. This is a good precaution because the eggs of the beetles, concealed in the product when the examination was made, may hatch later and lead to new infestations. Glass jars aid the viewer in periodic examination of the food. Long storage of food products often ends with an infestation. If possible, products should be purchased in quantities suitable for early use, or adequate containers should be employed.

Adult beetles can be vacuumed or swept up and discarded. Empty the container outdoors or freeze the bag, to prevent beetles from crawling out of the vacuum cleaner afterwards.

Removing and cleaning up the source of the infestation is the best way to avoid future infestations and keep these insects under control. Pesticides are not recommended.

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**All pesticides distributed, sold or applied in New York State must be registered with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Questions concerning the legality and/or registration status for pesticide use in New York State should be directed to the appropriate Cornell Cooperative Extension Specialist or your regional DEC office.  
*READ THE LABEL BEFORE APPLYING ANY PESTICIDE.***

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