

## LARDER BEETLE



*Photo Credit: Gail Hampshire*

### DESCRIPTION

Larder beetles are  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{3}{8}$ " long, elongated oval in shape, and dark brown to black in colour with distinct, clubbed antennae. The upper  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the wing covers are covered with a wide, yellow band with six to eight dark spots on it. The underside of the body is covered with fine yellow hairs. The larvae are  $\frac{3}{8}$  to  $\frac{5}{8}$ " long, brown and very hairy. They have two backward, curved, sharp spines next to the last abdominal segment.

### BIOLOGY

During her lifetime, the female lays about 100 eggs on food and into cracks and crevices. Eggs hatch in 12 days and the larvae bore into the food material they are infesting. The male larvae molt five times and the females molt six times before they pupate. The larvae leave the food material and wander just before the last molt and often bore into wood or other similar materials to pupate. The life cycle, egg to adult, requires 40 to 50 days.

### HABITS

Adult larder beetles overwinter in cracks or crevices in outdoor locations and enter buildings in spring and early summer. These insects prefer to infest meats such as ham, bacon, dried beef and fish, as well as cheese, feathers, horns, skins, dry pet foods, hair and museum pieces. In homes, these beetles may be found infesting accumulations of dead cluster flies or dried rodent carcasses. Most of their damage is done by the larvae; however, the adults also feed. The adults avoid light during mating and egg-laying periods.

### CONTROL

Larder beetles are not as common as they once were because few people now cure meat in their homes. When these insects do appear, the homeowner usually finds the adult beetles or the wandering larvae. Control begins with a thorough inspection to discover the source of the infestation. The customer should be questioned about previous rodent, bird, and fly infestations. Locating the source(s) of the infestation might be difficult because larder beetles are often in a wall void or attic where dead insects, birds, or rodents provide a food source for the larvae. Whenever possible, the source of the infestation should be removed. Thorough sanitation in meat packing plants or factories that handle hides, feathers, or other suitable breeding materials is absolutely essential to prevent larder beetle infestations. Properly Labelled residual insecticide sprays or dusts can be applied into cracks and crevices that appear to be sources of these insects.