

MEDITERRANEAN FLOUR MOTH



Photo Credit: Andy Reago & Chrissy McClarren

DESCRIPTION

Adults are 1/4-1/2" long with a wingspan of a little less than 1 inch. The forewings are pale gray with wavy black lines running across them. The hindwings are dirty white. The larvae are 5/8-3/4" long when fully developed. They are white or light pink with a dark head and a dark plate just behind the head.

BIOLOGY

Females lay 115-680 eggs in flour or other larval food materials, where they hatch in three to five days. The larvae feed within the silken tubes they produce, maturing in about 40 days. They pupate within these silken cocoons in clean food material away from

infested products. The pupal stage lasts 8-12 days and the entire life cycle takes 8-10 weeks. There are at least 4 generations per year.

HABITS

This flour moth is a major pest of flour mills and infests a great variety of foodstuffs, including nuts, chocolate, seeds, beans, biscuits, flour, dried fruit and dehydrated dog food. Adults do not cause damage. Instead, the larvae spin silken tubes around themselves, and this silk sometimes becomes so thick in flour mills that it clogs machinery, requiring shut-down for cleaning.

The mature larvae have a tendency to migrate. They are often the first sign the homeowner has that there is an infestation in the home. The adults fly at night in a very characteristic zig-zag pattern and are attracted to light; they are seldom seen by the homeowner.

CONTROL

When a moth infestation is suspected, it is important to find and discard the infested items. These materials usually are found in seldom used flour or cereal products that have ended up in the back of the cupboard. The cupboards, shelves, cabinets, or pantries where the infested material is found should be cleaned carefully with a vacuum cleaner to remove flour and food dust. Insecticide sprays or dusts can be applied to these areas to control larvae that are missed by cleaning. Adult moths can be controlled with aerosol sprays containing pyrethrins. Sanitation and fumigation are necessary to control this moth in flour mills and other types of food processing facilities.