

Common New England Household Pests



Carpenter ants are so named because they tunnel in wood to increase living space for their nests. They prefer wet wood. Infestations are often associated with a water leak around a chimney, roof valley, gutter, door frame, or window, or where wood touches soil. Control depends on finding the nest.



Cockroaches are attracted to moist, warm areas that give them access to food and water. Keeping dishes washed, empty beverage bottles rinsed, and food and garbage in tightly sealed containers is key for control. The German cockroach, about 1/2 inch long with two dark brown stripes, is the most common.



Fruit flies are 1/16 to 1/5 inch long. Larvae feed on overripe or rotting organic materials, leftover beverage in unrinsed containers, and vegetables left out of the refrigerator. Although mainly a nuisance, they can contaminate food with bacteria.



Indian meal moths are 3/8 inch long. The wings are grey near the head end and copper at the rear. Larvae feed on grain, flour, cereal, dried fruit, and nuts, spinning silk as they crawl around. Birdseed is a common source of infestation.



Larder beetles are about 3/8 inch long. Larvae are fuzzy and about 5/8 inch long when fully grown. They feed on products of animal origin, including dead rodents, insects, meat, cheese, animal hides, and grease. Dry pet food is a common source of home infestation.



Termites are the most costly structural insect pest in southern New England, but are less common in northern areas. They usually enter structures through wood that is in direct contact with soil. Termites resemble ants, but do not have a constricted waist like ants. Damage occurs at a relatively slow rate. Finding winged termites in the spring indicates an older colony.