

Red Flour Beetles

Barb Ogg
UNL Extension Educator

I first realized we had a flour beetle problem when I was making cheese sauce for scalloped potatoes. I dropped three tablespoons of flour into the saucepan and immediately noticed a couple reddish-brown beetles floating in the butter. Not being particularly squeamish, I quickly picked them out and finished the cheese sauce. (And yes, we did eat the scalloped potatoes, with no negative consequences.) But, I also decided it was definitely time to see what was going on in the cupboard.

I found a few more beetles in the flour canister, which wasn't airtight. But, there was a huge beetle infestation in an unopened bag of flour. This infestation was so remarkable we took photos. (see figures) I also noticed the large infestation gave off a distinctive musty smell.

These pests are red flour beetles, *Triboleum castaneum*. They are also called "bran bugs". Adult beetles are about 1/8-inch long and small enough to squeeze into packaging and



(Above) Infestation of red flour beetles in bag of flour. (At left), highly magnified view of larvae and adult beetle.



canisters. They are most common in flour, but also have been found in breakfast cereals, cornmeal, crackers, oats, rye, nutmeats, dried fruits, milk chocolate, powdered milk and spices. Red flour beetles can breed year-round indoors where it is warm. Red beetle larvae hatch from eggs and are cream-colored, slender and wiry. They have six legs and

forked projections at the last rear body segment.

Red flour beetles can fly and can squeeze through window screen during summer months when they are active outdoors. But, based on the size of the infestation, I think the flour was already infested when I brought it home from the grocery store. I bought it (on sale) about two months before I found the infestation.

Managing red flour beetles and other pantry pests in the kitchen includes searching thoroughly and throwing all infested food away. No chemicals are needed.

Don't Get Trapped in a Smelly Situation

Soni Cochran
UNL Extension Associate

Situation: A gentleman has been having problems with rabbits and decides his best defense is trapping. At dusk, he sets a cage trap (live trap) and baits it for rabbits. In the morning, he goes out to check his trap and does find an animal in the trap, but it isn't a rabbit. He is face-to-face with a skunk. Now what does he do?

Prevention: The easiest way to keep from catching a skunk is to use a live trap only during the day. Close the trap before sunset and reset in the morning. Skunks are active at night and rarely out during the day.

But what do you do if you need to catch a nocturnal animal like a raccoon or opossum? If you want to use the trap at night and don't want to catch a skunk, set the live trap at least 18 inches off the ground. Raccoons and opossums are terrific



climbers. Make sure the trap is anchored securely so it doesn't fall.

When setting a live trap, you should always put a cloth over half the length of the trap covering the end opposite the door. Use something durable, like a towel, canvas or denim. The cloth should be disposable. Secure the cloth on the trap so it won't blow away. The cloth allows you to approach the animal without being seen (especially important when dealing with a skunk). Make sure you

practice opening the trap door BEFORE you set it. The time to figure out how the door works is when the trap is empty, not when an animal is in the trap.

If you live in Lancaster County and accidentally catch a skunk in a privately-owned live trap, you can call Animal Control for assistance in removing the animal. There is a fee. If you are using a trap supplied by Animal Control, they will come out and remove the skunk for no charge.

Before deciding to trap any animal, check with Animal Control (city limits) or Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for regulations/permits. And remember, trapping is not always the most effective option to control wildlife in your area. Contact the extension office for other management options or visit <http://lancaster.unl.edu>.

Source: *Releasing Unwanted Skunks from a Cage Trap* by Stephen Vantassel, UNL Extension Wildlife Specialist. Web site <http://www.icwdm.org>

Pocket Gophers in Your Alfalfa? UNL Wildlife Researcher Needs Your Help!

Pocket gophers are rodents that live in the soil. They get their name from fur-lined cheek pouches outside their mouth, one on each side of the face. These pockets are used to carry food.

Pocket gophers have a small and flattened head, short neck, powerful shoulders and large claws on their front paws. These are adaptations that help them dig their burrows and live

underground. Pocket gophers are often confused with ground squirrels. They are not the same as 13-lined ground squirrels which are often seen during the daytime.

Pocket gophers spend most of their time in their sealed tunnel systems. The mounds they create are typically fan-shaped, and tunnel entrances are usually plugged, keeping intruders out of burrows. The burrow

system of one pocket gopher can cover several hundred feet; one gopher can dig hundreds of mounds in a year's time. No wonder they are so destructive!

They are pests of alfalfa and native grassland and can reduce field productivity by 20-50 percent, depending on the gopher population. When they tunnel, they damage and feed on roots. They also feed on above-ground plants, particularly

green, succulent vegetation. In our area, they prefer alfalfa fields. Identify gopher damage at: <http://icwdm.org/Inspection/gardengrass.asp#Mounds> Stephen Vantassel, UNL wildlife project coordinator is conducting a research project to determine the most efficient trapping method for controlling pocket gophers.

He is looking for area farmers willing to give him

permission to trap pocket gophers on their alfalfa fields. To be included in the study, fields must have pocket gophers present and have had no pocket gopher control measures for at least one year. He is looking for fields within a one-hour drive of Lincoln. This research will only take a few days.

If you would be willing to help Stephen with this study, please contact him at 472-8961.

ewf needs volunteers

Volunteers are needed for **earth wellness festival** on Monday, March 27 at Southeast Community College in Lincoln. Approximately 3,000 fifth-graders participate in this annual event that involves students in creative and innovative environmental education activities.

Each year, over 250 volunteers take part in **earth wellness festival activities**. As classroom escorts, bus greeters, presenter and registration assistants; volunteers are essential to the success of this event. You may choose to volunteer all day (8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.) or morning only (8:30 a.m.-noon). In return, you receive a festival T-shirt, a free lunch, an invitation to our celebration party following the event and an opportunity to participate in a rewarding volunteer experience.

Please contact Meghan Sittler at 441-8000 or via e-mail at msittler@ci.lincoln.ne.us for more information.



Household Hazardous Waste Collections for 2006

The first hazardous waste collection is April 22. You have just enough time to clean out your messy garage or basement.

Items You Can Bring for Disposal

Heavy metals: items containing mercury such as thermometers and thermostats.

Solvents: mineral spirits, turpentine, paint strippers and thinners, oil-based paints, varnishes, stains, polishes and waxes.

Pesticides: weed killers, garden sprays, wood preservatives, roach powder, rat poisons. You may also bring EPA-banned products, like DDT, chlordane, 2,4,5-T, pentachlorophenol, silvex, PCP.

Items containing PCB's: Ballasts from old fluorescent fixtures and capacitors from old appliances including radios, motors and televisions.

Date Location

Saturday, April 22 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.	State Fair Park (4-H Youth Complex)
Saturday, May 20 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.	Pfizer Inc., 601 W. Cornhusker <i>includes latex paint exchange</i>
Friday, June 9 3 to 7 p.m.	Malcolm Fire & Rescue Station 10740 West 2, Malcolm
Saturday, June 10 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.	NE Wesleyan University, parking lot 56 & Huntington Streets
Saturday, Sept. 9 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.	Goodyear Tire & Rubber 4021 N. 56 Street
Saturday, Oct. 14 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.	State Fair Park (4-H Youth Complex)

Do not bring: latex paint (except May 20), medicines, fertilizers, explosives and ammunition. Batteries, antifreeze and used oil will not be accepted because these items can be recycled.

These collections are for household only; not for businesses. Only residents of Lincoln and Lancaster County can bring items to collections.

For more information, call the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at 441-8040.