

Indianmeal Moth

Plodia interpunctella

Identification

Size (Actual Size) 	1/2 inch in length (11mm), with a wingspread of about 5/8 inch (16mm)
Color - Adult	Newly emerged adults have a bi-colored wing. The outer half of the wing is covered with copper colored scales while the top portion is a tan color.
Color - Larva	The larva is on average 1/2 inch (13 mm) and can have a coloring of a dirty white to pink or green.

General Information

Indianmeal moths are the most common moth pest of dried food goods in the kitchen or pantry. Since they feed on any items containing grain or cereal products, the Indianmeal moth alone is responsible for most of the insect problems associated with the food industry.

In the warm summer months, these moths can be found living outdoors in large numbers in residential neighborhoods that contain mature nut (oak, walnut, hickory, etc) trees. They find their way into the homes and garages and will attack bird seed, pet food or grains and cereals. Often times, infestations are brought into the home through products purchased at stores that have an existing moth problem.

The adult male indianmeal moth actively flies in search of females to mate with. The female moth will remain relatively quiet in darkened or shaded areas until mating occurs. The male indianmeal moth is extremely attracted to pheromone lures containing the female sex attractant. The female moths look for food sources to lay their eggs after being mated. Food attractants are available that will attract females looking to lay eggs.



Indianmeal moth adult, webbing and pupal cases
Photo: Patrick Kelley



Life History, Food & Signs of Infestation

Insect Life Cycle Information	Generally, developmental time for the indianmeal moth from egg to adult in room temperature with a good food source is approximately 35 days. Mating and egg laying begins almost immediately after adults emerge from the pupa (cocoon). Adult moths do not feed and die within 7 – 10 days. Female moths can lay from 200 – 400 small, pinhead-sized, white eggs on or near the dried food source that they will infest.
Food & Feeding Habits	Indianmeal moth larvae will feed on grains, seeds, tree nuts, cereals, dried fruits, powdered milk, bird seed, dried pet foods and numerous other dry food goods. The larvae prefer broken grains to whole grains. It prefers coarser grades of flour as well as graham flour and corn meal.
Signs of Infestation	Look for the adult moths flying around areas where dried foods, pet food or bird seed is stored. They adult moths are most active at dusk. As the larvae (worms) of the indianmeal moth feed, they produce a silken layer of webbing on the surface of the food. The larvae will often be found beneath the protective layer of webbing, feeding vigorously. The larvae will remain on the food product until it is ready to pupate. It will often crawl up to the joint of the ceiling and the wall to make its cocoon. Carefully inspect food containers, boxes and bags containing dried food goods looking for adult moths, larvae, webbing or the tell-tale cocoons in the lips of bags or the top corners of boxes.



Indianmealmoth larvae and webbing on dry cereal
Photo: Patrick Kelley