

Silver Fish *Lepisma saccharina*

Color: Silver gray / shiny mottled

Shape:

Slender

Size:

1/3 to

1/2 inch

Antenna

e: Two

Flight:

No



Description

Silverfish are shiny, silver or pearl gray, and firebrats are shiny, mottled gray. Adults of both are slender, wingless, soft-bodied insects 1/3 to 1/2 inch long. They have scaly bodies that taper gradually to the rear with two slender antennae in front and three long, thin appendages in back.

Habits

During the day, both silverfish and firebrats hide. If the object they are hiding under is moved, they dart toward another hiding place. They come out at night to seek food and water. Items on their preferred menu are moist wheat flour, books, any paper on which there is glue or paste, sizing in paper (including wallpaper) and book bindings, and starch in clothing. They can live for several months without food.

Habitat

Silverfish live and develop in damp, cool places, particularly in basements and laundry rooms. Firebrats thrive best in very warm, moist places. Silverfish and firebrats can be found in bookcases, closets, and places where books, clothing, starch, or sugar foods are available. They hide in baseboards and around window and door frames from which they seek out food sources. Sometimes they are seen in the bathtub or sink. They do not crawl up through the drain, but fall in and cannot climb up the slippery sides to escape. They may be brought in on lumber, wallboard, or similar products.

Prevention

Plug or putty holes or spaces around pipes. Repair leaks and drips in plumbing. Clean out closets periodically with vacuum cleaners. Collections of magazines, papers, and books provide food for them. Occasionally, move books around in a bookcase. Keep foods in containers with tight lids.

Management:

Apply pesticide emulsion directly to cracks in doors and window casings, baseboards, closets, bookcases, and places where pipes go through walls. If control is not achieved, silverfish are probably coming from untreated areas. Seek these areas out for treatment and also eliminate water sources.