

Indian Meal Moth



Indian meal moth larva (Clemson University/IPM Images)



Adult Indian meal moth (Gary Alpert/IPM Images)



Indian meal moth adult and larvae (Clemson University/IPM Images)

Typical Location When Observed: Indian meal moth is the most common moth found infesting foods in the home. The adults are found flying in the home, often near stored foods. Larvae infest nuts, herbs, dried flowers, coarsely ground grains, and other pantry items.

Importance/Damage: Infested materials eventually will be ruined, and, if not controlled, the infestations can spread to other foods stored nearby.

Distinguishing Features: Adults are small (3/8 inch), slender moths. The outer half of the front wings are bronze and purple in color, which distinguishes Indian meal moths from other moths found in homes. The larvae are similar in appearance to other food-infesting caterpillars.

Look-Alikes: Webbing clothes moth, Mediterranean meal moth, meal moth

General Life History and Habits: The moths are nocturnal. Females lay tiny eggs on or near food. Larvae usually feed on the surface of foods, often producing quantities of silk. They are capable of chewing through plastic bags and thin cardboard to get at food. Indian meal moths go through 3-4 generation per year in Colorado, with adults observed most commonly in the winter.

Resources: More complete information is available in Extension Fact Sheet 5.598, *Indian Meal Moth*.

Scientific Name: *Plodia interpunctella*

Order: Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths)

Family: Pyralidae (pyralid moths)

Actual Length

Version: July 30, 2009