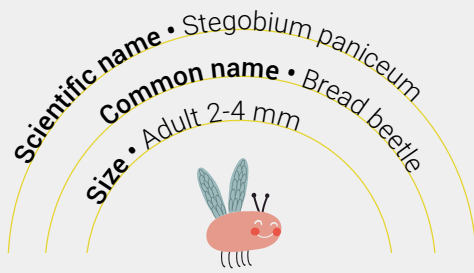


# Insects in our pantry

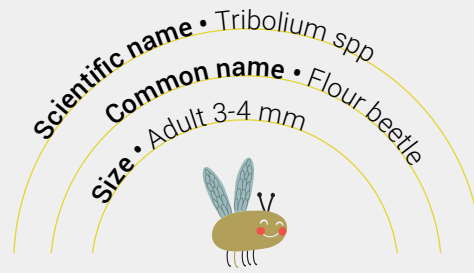
Sometime troublesome pests decide to make their home in our pantries, infesting pasta, rice and flour, as well as ready groceries such as biscuits, cereals, chocolate, nuts and even infusions. Our kitchens offer rich pickings for these **insects**, which fly in

through **open windows** or are brought into our homes in our shopping. The most frequent "scroungers" are beetles, dark insects which are no bigger than 4 mm and often a lot smaller. We can also find **lepidopterans**, commonly called moths or butterflies.

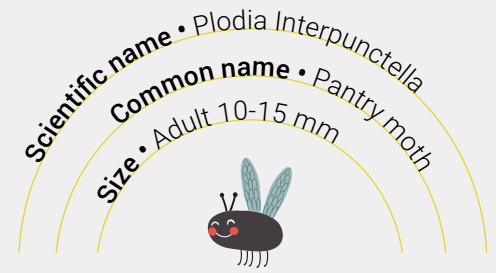
There are many different species of moths, but the most common one is definitely the **Plodia interpunctella**.



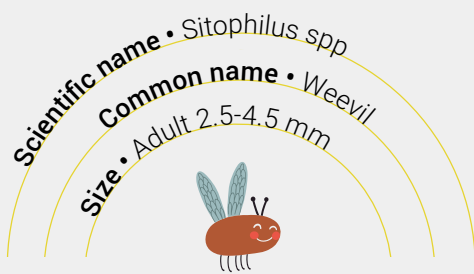
**Food attacked** • Bread, pasta, biscuits, chocolate, animal food



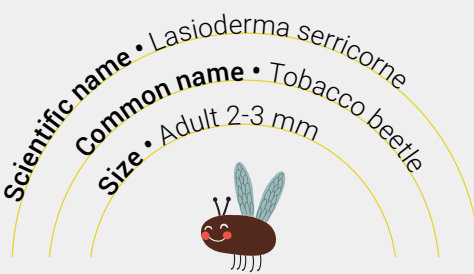
**Food attacked** • Grain and flour, nuts, peanuts, chocolate



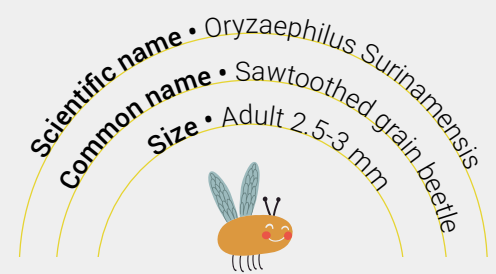
**Food attacked** • Pasta, rice, flour, biscuits, chocolate, cereals, nuts, dried legumes, infusions



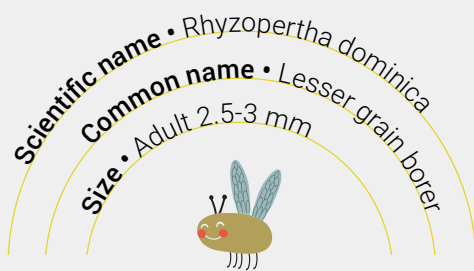
**Food attacked** • Cereals, legumes, chestnuts, sunflower seeds



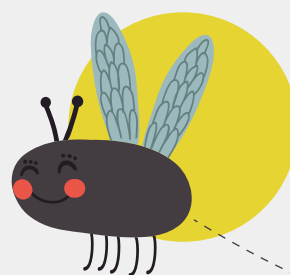
**Food attacked** • Pasta, rice, flour, biscuits, chocolate, cereals, nuts, dried legumes, infusions, tobacco



**Food attacked** • Foodstuffs



**Food attacked** • Pasta, rice, flour, biscuits, chocolate, cereals, nuts, dried legumes, infusions



The growth of these insects depends largely on the **temperature**, so they are a lot more prolific in the summer. Even in winter however, thanks to the **heating** in our homes, they continue to feed and multiply.

We normally discover we have them when they are mixed in with our food, when they are on the move, looking for other environments to infest or tastier

food or, in the case of the pantry moth, when the fully grown larvae leave their growth site in search of somewhere suitable to spin their cocoons and transform into adults.

Anyone who has experienced an **infestation** of pantry moths will certainly have seen the tell-tale whitish "little worms" or "caterpillars" with a dark head climbing up the walls or on the units

in the kitchen. Another sign you have pantry moths are silken threads spun by the **larvae** inside infested food packets and, obviously, the moths themselves with their typical half grey half brown colour flying about.

## Prevention

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The best way to avoid pantry bug infestations is to store food in unopened packets and transfer any opened products to **airtight containers**.

Even new packaging, such as cardboard boxes which are often used by pasta and biscuit manufacturers, cannot stop them, as they force their way in through tiny cracks. If you realise you have an infestation, you should open these boxes as well and store their contents in insect-proof containers.

There are **sticky traps** to capture pantry moths which are activated with an artificial pheromone which stimulates the female pheromone when she is ready to mate so attracts only males. If females are not fertilised, they cannot lay eggs which develop into larvae and cause all the damage. As for beetles, you can buy sticky traps for them which are activated with pheromones but as there are many different species and each one responds to a specific

pheromone, you would have to use them all.

This isn't very practical because it would be very **expensive**, in fact these traps are mainly used in factories.

## What to do if you discover an infestation

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If you notice moths flying about or little insects scuttling around in your cupboards, conduct a thorough **inspection** of everything you have in your kitchen, identifying the infested foodstuff which should be immediately thrown away.

Any food that does not appear to be infested should be placed in airtight

containers as it may contain eggs which could later hatch and start off another infestation. If food is kept in an airtight container, the insects born from concealed eggs cannot get out and the problem is confined to the container. As a general rule, **insecticides** are not recommended because infestations occur close to food and

preparation areas so there is a risk of **contamination**. Pyrethrum-based insecticides, which leave no residue, are used for pest control in food storage and processing areas in industry.

