

Insect Infestation Prevention

The warm weather will soon be here and I feel this is a good opportunity to remind all our bird feeding customers of the potential to have seed damaged by Indian Meal Moths. These moths occur naturally in Canada, as they do in most parts of the world. They and their larva live on starchy products such as cereals, grains, nuts, rice, dog food, biscuits and nuts.

The adult moths start laying eggs as soon as temperatures warm up in late spring, or earlier in warm houses where conditions are suitable. The adult moth deposits 200-400 eggs on or near potential food, where 5-10 days later, the larvae will hatch. These larvae will normally enter food containers through openings but are capable of chewing through most packaging material, even six mil polypropylene plastic.

Indian Meal Moth larvae will continue to eat, grow, form webbing and pupate until 2-3 weeks later they emerge as adult moths to start the process over again.

Cereals, nuts, pet foods, bird seed, pastry and baked products and most other grain products are susceptible to this problem insect.

To minimize the chance of infestation you for these simple rules.

1. In warm weather keep a maximum of two weeks supply of potential food sources in your home.
2. Store these susceptible products in a cool dry place. Meal Moths thrive in a hot and humid environment.
3. Check all susceptible products for signs of infestation before purchasing. Look in the corners of bags and under the lids of boxes for webbing, cocoons or larvae.
4. If an infestation does occur, do not panic. Keep in mind that insects are more unsightly than dangerous. In the case of bird seed, the infested product is not harmful to the birds. This seed may be fed directly to the birds or may be frozen for future use. Freezing kills the offending insects without damaging the seed. If the infestation is in human or pet food, the products should be removed from the house and placed in a composter, if appropriate, or put in an outside garbage container for disposal.
5. Vacuum and wash all shelving where the infested products were stored. Check all surrounding products, shelves, cracks, and crevices for cocoons, wandering adults and larvae. These insects may be vacuumed up, but make sure to remove the vacuum bag from the vacuum cleaner and place in an outside garbage immediately upon completion of cleaning.

Following these simple rules will greatly reduce the chance of infestation and minimize the effects if one does occur.

