

Thursday, 7 July 2016

Biosecurity SA – Plant Health

Call the Exotic Pest Hotline 1800 084 881

Khapra Beetle

Trogoderma granarium

What is Khapra beetle?

Khapra beetle (*Trogoderma granarium*) is a serious pest of stored grain and dry foodstuffs worldwide. It can cause losses of up to 75% from direct feeding. Infested grain also becomes contaminated with beetles, cast skins and hairs from larvae, which can be a health risk and are difficult to remove from grain storage structures and transport vessels.

This beetle is not present in Australia and poses a major threat to Australia's grains, dried fruit and nut industries.

What does it look like?

Khapra beetle adults are small (2-3 mm long and 1-2 mm wide), brownish in colour with a smooth oval shaped body. There are 3 transverse bands (markings) of pale colour hairs on the wing covers. Eggs hatch into small hairy larvae that can grow up to 7 mm long, are reddish brown in colour and darken as they mature. Larvae have characteristic long hairs all over their body, especially at the rear end and can survive without food for over 12 months.



Khapra beetle adults, larvae and cast skins in stored grain

Image Courtesy Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development Archive, Bugwood.org

Where can it be found?

Khapra beetle feeds on grains and seeds as well as processed vegetable and animal products including spices, herbs, nuts, dried fruits and dried animal skins. The beetle prefers hot, dry conditions and may be found in grain and food stores, in malhouses, seed processing plants, fodder production plants, dried milk factories, stores of packing materials (used or unused sacks, bags, crates) and kitchen pantries.

In addition to the obvious grain and stored product hosts, the beetle has been found in many locations that would not be obvious food sources, unless one realises that the insect is by nature an omnivorous protein scavenger. It has been found in the seams and ears of burlap bags, corrugated boxes and even soiled linen and priceless oil paintings. Such infestations may result from the storage of the product in infested warehouses, by transportation in infested conveyances, or from reuse of sacks or packaging previously used to hold material infested by Khapra beetle.

What should I look for?

Khapra beetle will be found in stored products and around places where stored products are kept or transported. It can also be found between cracks and wall linings of storage containers, walls and floors. It will not usually be present outdoors or in damp areas.

When examining grain samples, characteristic hairy larvae and cast skins are the most likely stage that will be seen.

What can it be confused with?

Warehouse, carpet and hide beetle larvae are almost identical in appearance to Khapra beetle larvae. Only microscopic examination can separate them. If you find any beetle or hairy larvae fitting the description of the Khapra beetle, call the 1800 084 881 Exotic Plant Pest Hotline or Biosecurity SA on 8207 7820

**If you see anything unusual,
Call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline**

