



Urban Integrated Pest Management

Earwigs

Insect **3**
Fact
Sheet

Introduction

The European earwig is a common pest of the home and garden in New England which can be quite destructive to both houseplants and garden plants. Earwigs have a foul odor and often show up in unwanted places, such as around the kitchen or bathroom.

Description

The adult European earwig is reddish brown and resembles certain beetles. Unlike other insects, it has a pair of forcep-like appendages on the end of the body. They can be used to determine the sex of the individuals (see figure b). Earwigs use their forceps both as a defense organ and as an aid in mating. The wings of earwigs are very short, exposing the abdomen, and are seldom used for flying. The antennae are slender and very flexible. Young earwigs resemble the adult female, but are smaller and lighter in color.

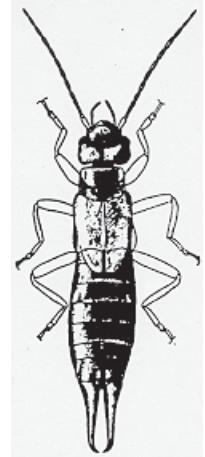


Fig. a adult female

Life cycle

In New England, earwigs overwinter in the adult stage. In early spring the female lays eggs in a nest in the ground and carefully guards the eggs until they hatch. She broods her young until they are capable of caring for themselves. There are usually about 30 young in a brood.

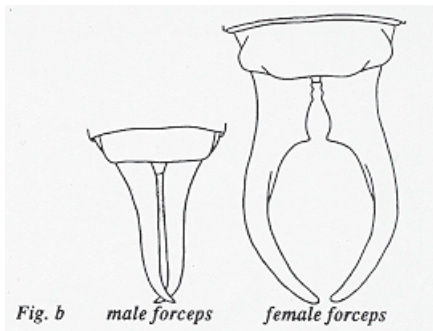


Fig. b male forceps female forceps

During the day the earwig is inactive and hides in a variety of places in and around the house, such as in wet mops, flower pots, woodpiles, behind loose boards, at the base of trees and in shrubbery. Earwigs become active at night and roam about feeding on a variety of things (e.g., garbage and various house plants). In the garden they may damage dahlias, zinnias, butterfly bush, lettuce, strawberry, celery, potatoes and seedling beans and beets. You can also find them in the ears of corn where they feed on the silks.

Control

Since earwigs are chiefly an outdoor insect, elimination of their outdoor habitats, such as leaves and debris next to the house, will help discourage their presence. However, chemical control may be needed to eliminate a population that has built up.

Outdoors, apply pesticides to areas around the foundation of the house where earwigs are seen. Treat the entire infested area except where indicated in the precautions stated on the label. Apply in the spring as the young earwigs are leaving their nests and again in midsummer if earwigs are troublesome.

Consult your county Extension Educator (see county office telephone listing below) for specific pesticide recommendations.

UNH Cooperative Extension County Office Telephone Numbers

Belknap (603) 527-5475	Carroll (603) 539-3331	Cheshire (603) 352-4550	Coos (603) 788-4961	Grafton (603) 787-6944
Hillsborough Goffstown (603) 641-6060	Merrimack (603) 796-2151	Rockingham Brentwood, NH 03833 (603) 679-5616	Strafford (603) 749-4445	Sullivan (603) 863-9200

Stop! It is always the pesticide applicator's responsibility, by law, to read and follow all current label directions for the specific pesticide being used. If unsure of registration status of a particular pesticide product, contact the NH Division of Pesticide Control at (603) 271-3550. Store pesticides in their original containers in a locked cabinet or shed away from food. Dispose of unused pesticides or empty containers safely, according to NH regulations. If you suspect pesticide poisoning, call the New Hampshire Poison Control Center at 1-800-562-8236.



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