



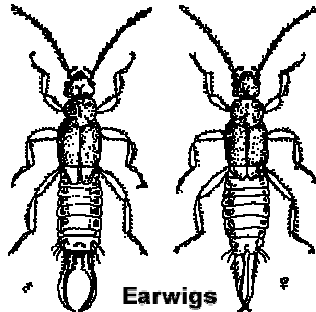
**STROUD
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

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PEST CONTROL SERVICE

Pest Information Leaflet No. 9

EARWIGS



2002-2003
Crime Reduction in Rural Areas
2004-2005
Services for Older People

Description

The earwig is a garden pest which occasionally enters houses. It has a dark reddish brown body which is characterised by a pair of pincers at the end of the abdomen, and is approximately 13 mm long. The pincers, or forceps are a defence mechanism used mainly as a deterrent and are harmless to humans.

Biology and Habitat

Earwigs are nocturnal insects and seek out dark, narrow crevices for their day-time rest. They may start to come into houses in late summer, seeking good hiding places, in cracks and crevices of doors and windows, folded handkerchiefs, bath towels and so on. By mid-September, however, they have mostly buried themselves in the ground where they spend the winter.

Earwigs mate in the autumn and the male and female often spend the winter together until early spring when the male is driven out. The female then prepares a brood chamber in the ground and lays around 30 - 50 eggs in it. The female remains with the eggs, defending them and keeping them clean and tends them even when they come above ground. They feed on dead vegetable matter, live plants and also catch small insects and mites. Earwigs may cause damage in gardens and nurseries as they gnaw plants, but they destroy many other plant pests such as aphids.

Importance

Earwigs are of nuisance value only since they neither spread disease or constitute any risk to health.

Control

The best way of avoiding a plague of earwigs is to deny them suitable living conditions close to the house. Luxuriant plant growth and compost heaps provide excellent quarters for them.

It is possible to catch them in traps, by filling a flowerpot with peat or plant fibre and standing it with the bottom up. The earwigs will creep into the trap which can be emptied every morning. If an insecticide must be used, a crawling insect powder suitable for garden application and applied to those places most likely to offer harbourage, sprinkled onto dry earth and covered with a board.

Vacuuming regularly in those rooms which have been invaded is the most convenient way to deal with them indoors.

Safety

Before using an insecticide, to protect yourself and others and to minimise damage to the environment **ALWAYS READ AND FOLLOW THE APPLICATION AND USE INSTRUCTIONS PRINTED ON THE CONTAINER**

Pest Control Service

Stroud District Council's Pest Control Service can provide a professional treatment of some insect pests. For further details and current charges please telephone Stroud 754919 or write to:

Pest Control Service
Environmental Health Service
Stroud District Council
Ebley Mill, Westward Road
Stroud, Glos. GL5 4UB

e-mail:- environmental.health@stroud.gov.uk

Leaflets Available in this Series

- 1 Wasps
- 2 Psocids
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- 5 Solitary (Masonry) Bees
- 6 Carpet Beetles
- 7 Woodlice
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- 10 Bats
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- 14 Rats