

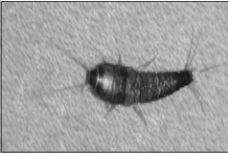
Silverfish, Earwig, Woodlouse & Slug Control

Advice to Householders



■ Silverfish, Earwig, Woodlouse & Slug ■

Characteristics & Behaviour



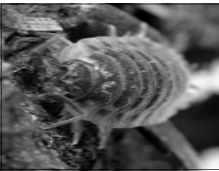
Silverfish are carrot shaped, primitive wingless insects which are about 12mm long with long antennae and three tail-like appendages at the tip of the abdomen. They are silver-grey in colour and move with a similar action to that of a fish.

Silverfish are nocturnal in their habits however they often get trapped in baths, basins and china ware as they can not climb on smooth surfaces. They can be found under leaves, bark or stones, but also in cool damp places in domestic properties. They feed on moulds growing around washbasins, baths, showers and tiling.



Earwigs vary in colour but they are usually reddish brown. Adult earwigs are around 15-16mm long with a reddish head and pale yellow-brown legs with a pair of pincers at the end of the abdomen. Earwigs do possess wings, but they are rarely used to fly.

Earwigs are also nocturnal creatures, which hide in cracks and crevices during the day. They feed on a variety of garden plants making small irregular holes in the leaves, but can also be found inside many houses during the day in parts of the building which provide shelter.



Woodlice are land crustaceans. They have oval and domed shaped bodies, which are clearly segmented; they are grey in colour and can grow up to 15mm in length. They also have seven pairs of legs and prominent antennae. These insects breathe through gills on the underside of their bodies.

Woodlice tend to shy away from bright light and are usually found under wood, stones, vegetation etc. Occasionally they will invade a house if large numbers of them are found to be nesting near to the building. They are harmless feeders that often feed on rotten wood or other vegetable matter.



Slugs are generally grey to black in colour although this may vary. They move by gliding along on a muscular 'foot'. They have a stout overall appearance with short antennae.

Slugs are most active at night, on cloudy days and misty days. They feed on a variety of living plants as well as decaying plant matter. The foot muscle constantly secretes mucus which later dries to form the silvery slime trails that signal their presence. During cold weather they will hibernate in the topsoil, and often enter houses by being brought in on logs being used for firewood. They will hide in darkened areas particularly under sinks, baths etc. where there is a degree of dampness.

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Significance

None of these creatures are of any significance in terms of having an effect on public health. They are simple pests, which many people find unpleasant to have in their homes.

Control Measures

Silverfish can be controlled by raising the temperature and lowering the humidity of the environment, coupled with improving standards of personal hygiene. Removing any damp in areas near to where you are finding them will also help the situation. It is vital to ensure that you check that there are no leaks in any water or waste pipes. A residual insecticidal spray or dust can be used to deter and kill off the insects.

Earwigs can be controlled by reducing the humidity in a building and ensuring that any areas of dampness are eliminated. Creeping plants etc. close to a house should be removed or cut back to reduce harbourage for these insects. It is essential that downspouts and gutters are correctly fixed and aligned with no leaks to ensure that they don't give rise to breeding sites for females. Insecticidal sprays can be used where the insects are seen, inside or outside. The base of external walls can be sprayed with a residual insecticide for effective long-term control.

Woodlice do not necessarily need specific treatment to control them, but if they persist, then you need to ensure that any areas of dampness are remedied effectively and again reduce the humidity of the property. The use of an insecticidal powder or residual spray around the door thresholds or other points of entry will help.

Slugs and snails need a management programme, relying on a combination of methods. The first step is to eliminate to the extent possible, all places where slugs and snails can hide during the day such as boards, stones, debris, weedy areas around tree trunks, dense ground cover etc. There are areas where this will not be possible and regularly hand picking the slugs and disposing of them will reduce their numbers. Resolving any damp problems in the property will reduce feeding areas for them indoors and reduce hiding areas for them. However this alone will not be sufficient control for them.

Traps can also be laid and these can either be bought at garden centres or home made. Traps can be made from timber 12" x 15", raised off the ground on 1" runners. The slugs then need to be scraped off this daily and crushed. Beer baited traps can also be used, but the beer must be fresh and topped up regularly to ensure that there is sufficient beer for the molluscs to drown in. However, these traps will only attract slugs from a nearby area. Barriers can also be used to stop slugs getting to an area of plant by making them out of copper flashings and screens. Copper is believed to be effective because it reacts with the slime that the slug secretes causing a flow of electricity through the slug. The screens need to be at least 6" tall and buried several inches below the soil surface to prevent the slugs crawling under them. In addition,

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It is important that the manufacturers instructions are followed when baits are being used, as they can also be harmful to non-target species. Also the chemicals in them can be less effective under certain weather conditions. In addition, slug baits and pellets can be used, and when used alongside other methods can prove to be effective. It is important that the manufacturers instructions are followed when baits are being used, as they can also be harmful to non-target species. Also the chemicals in them can be less effective under certain weather conditions.

Other information leaflets available:

- ▶ Carpet, Museum & Fur Beetle Control
- ▶ Furniture Beetle (Woodworm) & Wharf Borer Control
- ▶ Cockroach Control
- ▶ Spider Beetle Control
- ▶ Housefly Control
- ▶ Flea Control
- ▶ Black Ant Control
- ▶ Psocid (Booklouse) Control
- ▶ Biscuit and Larder Beetle
- ▶ Pest Control Advice

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If you need help to understand this information in another language or would like it in another format (audio version or large print) please call
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