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Root weevils

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Quick Facts

Root weevils are common invaders of Colorado homes, and although a nuisance, cause no harm to humans, pets or household furnishings.

The strawberry root weevil, rough strawberry root weevil and black vine weevil are the most common root weevils in Colorado and have similar life cycles.

Only in extreme instances is insecticide treatment necessary to prevent infestations in the home.

Acephate is recommended for damage-control treatments when adult root weevils threaten plant damage, and Orthene can be used to kill adults before they lay eggs to prevent root injury by larval feeding.

Life Cycle

These species of root weevils most commonly are found in Colorado: strawberry root weevil, rough strawberry root weevil and black vine weevil. In the adult stage, all three species are small, dark colored snout beetles.

Largest is the black vine weevil, which may reach 1/2-inch in length and has characteristic patches of yellow hairs on the wing covers.

Strawberry root weevils are shiny, brownish-black and about 1/4-inch long. Rough strawberry weevils are intermediate in size.

A behavioral characteristic is that, when disturbed, the root weevils drop readily to the ground. Root weevils do not fly.

This information provided by:

Root weevils are one of the most common insects that wander into Colorado homes. At times, these insects can be a considerable nuisance, although they cause no harm to humans, pets or household furnishings. Outdoors, root weevils occasionally feed on and damage certain woody shrubs and other perennial plants.

1. Whitney S. Cranshaw, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension entomologist and associate professor, entomology; James R. Feucht, extension horticulturalist and professor, horticulture. 1/92. ©Colorado State University Cooperative Extension. 1994. For more information, contact your county Cooperative Extension office.

Life cycle of all three root weevils is similar. Most root weevils overwinter as nearly full-grown, pale, legless larvae that feed on the roots of strawberry, raspberry, clover, spruce, Douglas-fir and many woody shrubs. A few weevils, particularly black vine weevils will overwinter as adults.

Development and pupation of root weevils is completed in the soil, and most adults emerge sometime in June. Eggs apparently are laid near the crowns of plants throughout the summer. This egg-laying is interspersed by feeding on foliage of various plants.

Root weevil feeding produces characteristic notches along leaf margins. Euonymus is one of the plants more frequently damaged by adult root weevils. This damage typically is mistaken for grasshopper feeding.

Household Pests

Most frequently root weevils wander into homes during late June and July, but infestations occasionally occur at all periods of the year except late spring. Inside homes, the root weevils cause no injury to humans or household furnishings. However, they can be quite abundant and a considerable nuisance. Occasionally, root weevils will damage plants in home greenhouses.

Just why these insects are attracted to homes is unclear, but perhaps the houses provide shelter during the hot summer months when the insects are relatively inactive. Moisture sources in and around homes also attract the adult weevils.

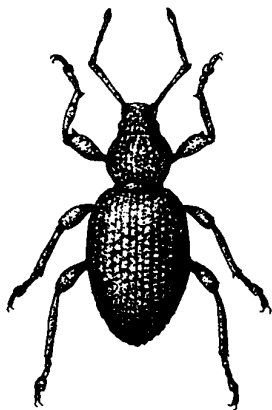
Because root weevils do no harm inside homes, the best way to handle infestations is to try to tolerate the occasional beetle, vacuuming them as they are observed. Root weevils will move out of homes on their own, and infestations subside as rapidly as they begin.

When necessary, prevention of root weevil movement into homes is best achieved by using barrier insecticide treatments along the outside foundation. Diazinon, Dursban and Orthene are some commonly available insecticides that may be used as barrier treatments.

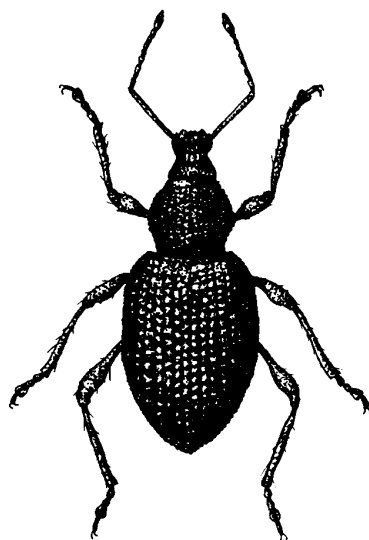
Sprays should be made one to two weeks prior to when strawberry root weevils were first observed in homes during previous years. Applications may need to be repeated at four-week intervals.

Insecticides are not recommended indoors for root weevil control since the insects often are widely dispersed in a home.

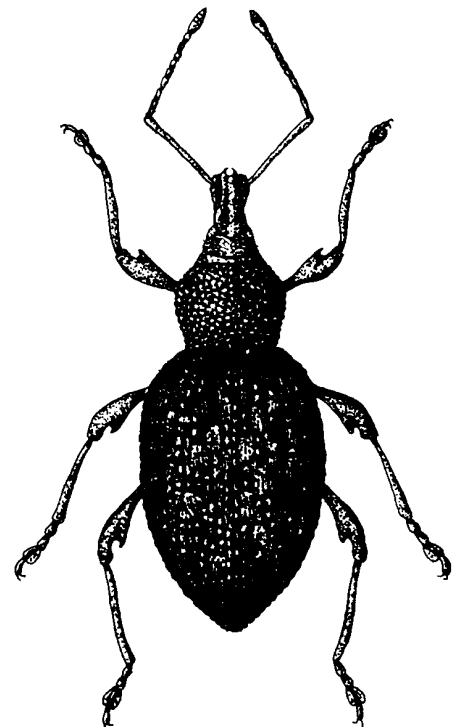
Root weevil control indoors also should include sealing openings and screening windows to prevent entry. Root weevil populations also can be reduced by removing plants, around the outside of the home, on which the insects feed.



Strawberry root weevil.



Obscure root weevil.



Black vine weevil

Plant Pests

Adult root weevil damage to plants, such as euonymus, can be severe. Acephate (Orthene) is recommended for damage-control treatment. Applications should be made as soon as leaf notching is observed and may need to be continued at three-week intervals through August.

Where root injury is important, due to larval feeding, Orthene may be used to kill adults before egg-laying. Treatments generally should be started in early June and involve a thorough wetting of the soil underneath the plants and the foliage.