

Seed Moth Prevention and Extermination

Keep The Food Supplies For Your Parrots, Hookbills, and Softbills Safe and Healthy with a Few Simple Tips

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Ah yes, the First day of Spring...thoughts of warm winds to blow the chill away and warm sunshine to make our spirits soar and the flowers grow.

Along with warm weather comes the pesky bird seed moth. We know it as the bird seed moth and loathe its existence; what it really is the Indian meal Moth. They are found in almost every grain product, not only your bird seed. They can be found in bird-free homes as well. They get into grain and grain-based food products and lay their eggs. Then, when the eggs are warm enough, they hatch, the larvae eat the grain, pupate and eventually develop into the adult moth.

These adults are able to chew through packaging and storage bags and take wing in our houses looking for more ripe breeding grounds. They are not choosy. They will accept not only bird seed but pasta, flour, egg noodles, breakfast cereals - basically anything seed or grain based - as a breeding ground.

The first step is to prevent an infestation in the first place. It may be cumbersome but faster than getting rid of the pesky little vermin once they have established a defensive front. To prevent an infestation you need to freeze all birdseed and grain based products that you bring into your home for 48 - 72 hours. This will kill any eggs and larvae that may be in the package/container. My preference is to store all extra bird seed in the freezer to ensure an infestation does not take hold. Freezing everything for an indefinite period of time is impractical. But by taking the initial precaution of freezing for a minimum of 72 hours you will greatly reduce the possibility of an infestation.

Now that you have them, What to do about these pesky intruders? Controlling them once they are established is a challenging and multi-step process. You need to kill all the eggs and larvae and get rid of the adults.

First you have to locate the source of the infestation. The first place to start is in bags and containers of birdseed, especially wild bird seed. Once you have located the source, this source must be wiped down on the outside with a mild solution of bleach and water (I use 1 tsp. chlorine bleach to 1 gallon or 4 liters of water). Then the bag or container and contents need to be frozen for 48-72 hours to kill everything inside. Once you have isolated the main source, start looking around the pantry and where you store your bird food for pupae.

Adult moths will lay eggs in cracks and corners, especially along the ceiling, as well as in the shelf pin holes of cupboards. You will see yellowish casings inside thin web-like structures. Sweep all of these away, and in the case of finding them in the shelf pin hole, remove the pupae with a cotton swab to dispose of them before they hatch.

You will also have to trap the adults so they do not reproduce. The most effective way to do this is to use pheromone traps. The traps are designed to attract the adult males and trap them. This takes the male population out of the picture and the moths cannot reproduce. The free females soon die off. This process will take about 6 weeks more or less, depending on where they are in their life cycle.

So to sum up, by following the steps below you can rid your home of these pesky moths in about 8 weeks:

1. Freeze all bird seed and grain based products for a minimum of 72 hours
2. Sweep and vacuum away all pupae
3. Use pheromone traps to eliminate the adult moths and prevent breeding and egg laying

Good luck with your preventative measures and have a great spring and summer!

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