

Silverfish and Firebrat

Profile/Characteristics

The silverfish (*Lepisma Saccharina* L.) and the firebrat (*Thermobia Domestica*) are closely related insects. Both are very common household pests.

They are elongated, scaly, segmented wingless insects, with a pair of long fine antennae at the rear. Silverfish may grow to 12mm in length but the firebrat tends to be larger (14mm) with much longer antennae. The body is covered in scales but the silverfish, as the name implies, is silvery and glistening in appearance whilst the firebrat is greyish with dark, irregular markings.

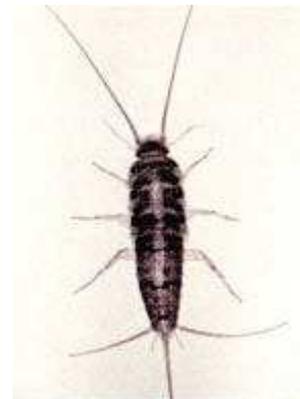
Life History

The female silverfish is believed to lay about 100 eggs, either singly or in groups, usually in crevices and cracks and not glued to the surface on which they are laid. They are small and white when first laid but soon turn brownish and are difficult to find. They hatch in two to eight weeks dependent on temperature and humidity.

The life cycle of the firebrat is similar to that of the silverfish but it lays a greater number of eggs.

Habitat

The silverfish is found where conditions are fairly moist, in kitchens, larders and particularly in bathrooms and basements. It may occur amongst books and paper, in slightly damp cupboards and behind skirting and loose wallpaper. It is a general scavenger in warehouses and granaries.



Habitat (continued)

The firebrat requires much higher temperatures, ideally between 32°C and 48°C. It is often found in bakeries and near ovens and hot pipes. Both the silverfish and firebrat are nocturnal, hiding during the day and coming out to look for food at night.

Food

Both species feed principally on carbohydrates and small amounts of protein. The silverfish feeds mainly on small food particles, paste from the back of wallpaper, gums and glues from book bindings and also fragments of dead insects.

Control

The presence of silver fish is an indication of damp conditions, therefore look at the floors, walls and ceilings for signs of staining due to dampness.

Keeping your home clean and free of damp will help prevent infestation, for large numbers a residual insecticide can be purchased from DIY stores. Apply it into cracks, crevices, around heating & hot water pipes, and other similar sites.