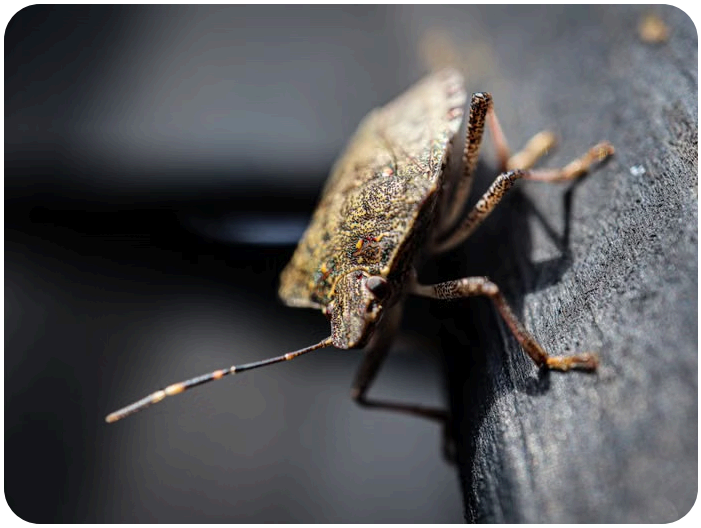


IN-DEPTH GUIDE

Stink bugs, pantry pests and other bugs: the complete homeowner's guide

Everything a homeowner needs in one place, based on public guidance from the U.S. EPA and CDC, with links to every source.

PestGuardCo.com · To reach an independent local pest control company, call (855) 424-9709.

> Plain-language summary of public guidance from the U.S. EPA and CDC · Updated November 2026

Check these first

1. **For stink bugs**: check sunny windows and walls, especially south- and west-facing, in fall.
2. **For pantry pests**: check flour, rice, cereal, pasta, nuts, spices and pet food for tiny bugs, larvae or webbing.
3. **Look for small moths** flying in the kitchen at night. Pantry moths often show up first.
4. **Check the oldest packages** at the back of the shelf first.

5. **Look for gaps** around windows, siding, vents and attic openings where fall bugs get in.

6. **Note where and when you see them**; it helps tell which bug it is.

If you see this, it usually means...

IF YOU SEE

Stink bugs gathering on sunny walls in fall

IT USUALLY MEANS

Stink bugs looking for a place to spend the winter

NEXT STEP

Seal gaps before they get in; vacuum the ones inside.

IF YOU SEE

Stink bugs inside on warm winter days

IT USUALLY MEANS

Bugs that overwintered in walls or the attic waking up

NEXT STEP

Vacuum them; they'll keep appearing until spring.

IF YOU SEE

Tiny bugs or webbing in flour or cereal

IT USUALLY MEANS

Pantry beetles or moths

NEXT STEP

Throw out infested food in a sealed bag outside.

IF YOU SEE

Small moths in the kitchen

IT USUALLY MEANS

Pantry moths (Indian meal moth)

NEXT STEP

Check every dry food package, including pet food.

IF YOU SEE

Beetles near windows or carpets

IT USUALLY MEANS

Could be carpet beetles

NEXT STEP

Vacuum along edges and check wool and stored clothes.

How to tell what you have

Stink bug

Shield-shaped, mottled brown, about 5/8 in.

Harmless but smelly when crushed. Gathers on warm walls in fall.

vs

Pantry beetle

Very small, reddish-brown, slender.

Lives in dry foods; found in packages and on shelves.

SIZE

Small

COLOR

Varies

WHERE

Windows, attics, pantries

WHEN

Fall invaders in autumn; pantry pests all year

Fall invaders like stink bugs

Stink bugs, lady beetles and similar insects gather on warm, sunny walls in fall and squeeze into gaps to spend the winter in walls and attics. On warm winter days, some wake up and wander into living spaces.

The fix is mostly sealing: caulk gaps around windows and siding, repair screens, and cover vents with fine mesh in late summer, before they move in. Indoors, vacuum them up.

Pantry pests: find the source package

Pantry beetles and moths live in dry foods like flour, cereal, rice, nuts, spices and pet food. One infested package can spread to others, so check everything on the shelf.

EPA's prevention advice applies directly: store open food in sealed plastic or glass containers and clean up spills right away. Throw out infested food, vacuum the shelves, and store new food sealed.

When sprays aren't the answer

Sprays don't belong on food shelves, and they don't solve a pantry problem anyway; removing the infested food does. For stink bugs, prevention at the outside walls works far better than sprays indoors.

EPA's general advice is to try prevention first and to use the least risky option that works.

What to do and what to avoid

Do

- Vacuum stink bugs and empty the vacuum bag into a sealed bag outside.
- Throw out any dry food with bugs, larvae or webbing, sealed in a bag.
- Vacuum pantry shelves, especially corners and cracks, then wipe them down.
- Store new dry foods in glass, metal or hard plastic containers with tight lids.
- Seal gaps around windows, screens and vents.

Avoid

- × Don't crush stink bugs indoors; they release a strong odor.
- × Don't spray products on pantry shelves or food. Clean and throw out instead.
- × Don't mix old and new flour or grains.
- × Don't seal gaps from inside while bugs are still in the walls; seal from outside in late summer.

Health and safety

- Stink bugs and pantry pests aren't known to spread disease and don't bite people.
- Throw out food with bugs in it rather than eating it.
- Some people are sensitive to the odor of stink bugs or to dust from carpet beetles.

Prevention checklist

- Seal gaps around windows, siding, vents and utility lines in late summer.
- Repair or replace damaged screens.
- Buy dry foods in amounts you'll use in a couple of months.
- Store flour, grains, nuts and pet food in sealed containers.
- Check packages for damage or bugs when you buy them.
- Clean pantry shelves a few times a year.

When to call a pro

Call a pro if stink bugs come in by the hundreds each fall, or if pantry pests keep coming back after a full clean-out.

1. **Identification**
   Confirming the bug, so the right steps are taken.
2. **Exterior sealing and treatment**
   For fall invaders, treating and sealing outside walls before they move in.
3. **Pantry clean-out guidance**
   Finding the source package and the hiding spots.
4. **Follow-up**
   Checking that the problem is gone, especially for pantry moths.

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Questions

Do stink bugs damage the house?

No. They don't eat wood or fabric; they're just a nuisance, and smelly when crushed.

Where do pantry bugs come from?

Often from a package that was already infested at the store, then they spread to other foods in the pantry.

Can I freeze food to kill pantry bugs?

Freezing for several days can help for items you want to keep, but heavily infested food is better thrown out.

Why do stink bugs come back every year?

They return to the same warm walls. Sealing gaps from outside before fall is what reduces them.

Sources

Do You Really Need to Use a Pesticide? (https://www.epa.gov/safepestcontrol/do-you-really-need-use-pesticide) **U.S. EPA**

Got Pests? Control Them Safely (https://www.epa.gov/safepestcontrol/got-pests-control-them-safely) **U.S. EPA**

Preventing Pests at Home (fact sheet, PDF) (https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-01/documents/preventpest.pdf) **U.S. EPA**

Do's and Don'ts of Pest Control (https://www.epa.gov/safepestcontrol/dos-and-donts-pest-control) **U.S. EPA**

This guide is PestGuard's own plain-language summary of public guidance from U.S. government agencies (EPA and CDC). U.S. federal government publications are generally in the public domain; follow the links to read the originals. It is general information, not an official government publication and not a substitute for an inspection. If you use any pest control product, read and follow the label. In an emergency, call 911. For pesticide questions, the National Pesticide Information Center can help: 1-800-858-7378.