

Pest Profile



Photo credit: Jim Kalisch, University of Nebraska

Common Name: Redlegged ham beetle (also known as the copra beetle)

Scientific Name: *Necrobia rufipes*

Order and Family: Coleoptera: Cleridae

Size and Appearance:

The redlegged ham beetle is a small, fast crawling, but slow flying beetle. It has a shiny metallic body and reddish legs.

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg	About 1 mm	Eggs are smooth, shiny and translucent. They are laid on the surface of food sources and in cracks and crevices, where they are often cemented together. Females can lay up to 2100 eggs in a lifetime.
Larva/Nymph	Up to 10 mm	There are 2 – 3 instars. Fully developed larvae are elongate, with a dark reddish-brown head and anal area. Larvae are repelled by light.
Adult	3.5 – 7 mm	The adults are shiny and metallic. The legs and base portion of the antennae are reddish. The body is bluish green, which helps to differentiate it from the closely related red-shouldered ham beetle, which has red coloring on its head, prothorax and the forward parts of its wings. The adults can emit a strong, but short-lasting odor when disturbed.
Pupa (if applicable)		Larvae seek a dry area to pupate.

Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.):

The larvae and adults have chewing mouthparts.

Host/s:

These scavengers primarily live in and feed on dead and decaying animal matter. They frequently attack ham and bacon, hence their common name. Larvae generally bore through the fatty areas while adults feed on the surface. They will feed on a variety of materials, including cheese, hide, bone meal, fish and guano. They will attack some plant materials, including cocoa beans, spices, garlic, dried figs and copra (dried coconut meat). They are also predators of the eggs and larvae of some other insects, including cheese skippers, and are even known to be cannibalistic. They occasionally feed on carrion, preferring drying carrion. They are commonly found on corpses outdoors in the US, and thus have some forensic importance.

Description of Damage:

They will attack and can ruin many stored products, particularly cured meats. Proper wrapping is necessary to protect the meats from these beetles.

References:

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