

Pest Profile



Photo credit: Jim Kalisch, University of Nebraska--Lincoln

Common Name: Firebrat, Bristletail

Scientific Name: *Thermobia domestica*

Order and Family: Thysanura: Lepismatidae

Size and Appearance: Firebrats are known by their carrot-shaped body and 3 long bristle-like tails. Adults are about 13 mm long and are wingless with gray colored bodies. They have distinguishable dark markings over their backs that make them easy to tell apart from other species such as silverfish. They have long antennae, compound eyes, and go through 3 to 4 molts prior to adulthood.

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg	< 0.1 mm	Females lay up to 3 clusters of 50 eggs in crevices. Warm temperatures are needed in order to hatch.
Larva/Nymph	1-12 mm	Nymphs resemble adults and must go through 3 to 4 molts to reach sexual maturity.
Adult	12 mm	Adults are dark gray in color with black markings on back. They feature long antennae and 3 distinct bristle-like tails on posterior region. Compound eyes.
Pupa (if applicable)		

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

Host/s: *Thermobia domestica* prefers hot temperatures, hence its namesake, and will be found in environments 90 degrees or warmer. They feed on books, paper, fabric, etc.

Description of Damage (larvae and adults): Damage will appear as irregular markings on books and paper documents. They may leave holes, notches along an edge, or etchings on the surface. They can also cause yellow staining as well as leave behind feces and shed scales if infestation high.

References:

Smith, E.H. and Whitman, R.C. (2007). Fabric and Paper Pests- Firebrats. In *NPMA Field Guide of Structural Pests*. (5.8.2). National Pest Management Association International.

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