

Soft Bodied Millipedes

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Soft-bodied millipedes sometimes become a household nuisance in North Central New Mexico. These minute, fuzzy creatures are often misidentified as carpet beetles or other beetle larvae. These millipedes can be distinguished from insect larvae by the number of legs. While insects have only six legs, soft-bodied millipedes have more than twenty. They are about 1/5th of an inch long and have many rows of tufted hair when viewed under magnification.

In the home environment, soft-bodied millipedes are most often noticed crawling on walls and other light-colored surfaces. Generally, this nuisance problem occurs during the fall and winter when millipedes are searching for warm, protected areas to overwinter. In the spring, the millipedes again become active as they search for a way out of the home. They are often reported in bathrooms, perhaps because the high humidity better suits them.

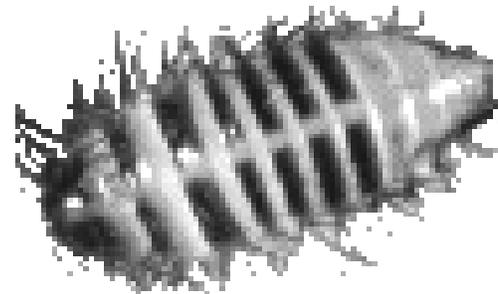
Like most other millipedes, these creatures live and breed among leaf litter and damp soil of forests and gardens. Soft-bodied millipedes feed on algae and are not damaging to plants, furnishings, people, foodstuffs or pets. They are not known to reproduce in the home and are expected to have a short life span inside the dry environment of homes.

Homeowners attempting to control soft-bodied millipedes have reported poor results from applying household insecticides. Insecticide application appears to be a short-term approach to millipede invasion and is not the preferred method of control.

Those experiencing a millipede nuisance should seek the outdoor source of the creatures. Once their habitat has been identified, millipedes can be excluded by sealing cracks, crevices and other openings which allow them entry into the home. Pay special attention to loose siding, cracked Stucco, plumbing and wiring which enters the home from outdoors.



Soft-bodied Millipede



Carpet Beetle Larvae

If an attempt to exclude millipedes from entering the home is unsuccessful, and these harmless creatures pose a frequent nuisance, homeowners may consider modifying habitat conditions in the flower beds and other areas outside the home. Removal of mulches, leaf litter and moisture in areas close to the home may diminish invading millipede population.