

# Dark & Yellow Mealworm

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Mealworms are among some of the largest insect pests of stored products. Their common names are derived from the color of the wireworm-like larvae. Both yellow and dark mealworms are in the genus *Tenebrio*, meaning "darkness," owing to the nocturnal habits of the larvae. Believed to be of European descent, both insects are cosmopolitan, with the yellow mealworm more prevalent in the cooler northern states.

The adults emerge in spring and early summer and females lay eggs over a period of 22-137 days. On the average, a yellow mealworm female will produce 276 eggs. The eggs are white and bean-shaped covered with a sticky secretion that causes the flour, meal, or grain waste in which the eggs are placed to adhere to them. The eggs hatch in about two weeks and slender white larvae emerge. The larvae soon turn yellow and when fully grown are about one-inch long and yellowing-brown toward each end and at the articulation of each segment. The larvae become full grown in about three months, but instead of transforming into the pupal and adult stages, they continue to feed and molt until cold weather and then hibernate. during late spring or early summer, they transform into the pupal stage where they remain for about two weeks.



The adult is a polished dark brown or black beetle about one-half inch long. Its thorax is finely punctured, and its wing covers are longitudinally striated or grooved. There is but one generation each year. The adults begin to appear in the latitude of Washington, D.C. during late May and early June and may be found until late in August. Both yellow mealworms and dark mealworms have well-developed wings and are attracted to light.

Because mealworms are entirely external feeders upon grains, they are not serious pests. Screening and fanning will easily remove them from grain shipments. However, the well-grown larva can do serious injury to whole grains under certain conditions, such as when grain is held for long periods without being moved. The majority of the damage is largely limited to contamination of the products by the worms and their waste products.

