

# Silverfish and Firebrats

## Identification

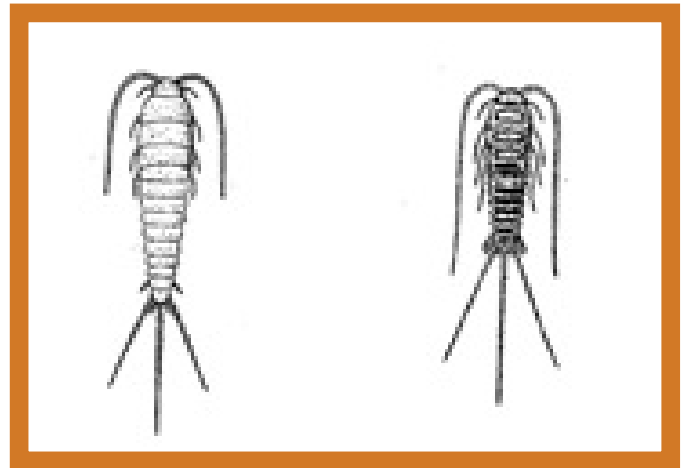
Silverfish and firebrats are common household pests. They are both about 1/2" long with a flattened, wingless body and six legs. Their antennae are long and slender, and they have three slender appendages at the rear of the body. Silverfish are silver to brown. Firebrats are grayish-brown.

## Signs of Infestation

Silverfish prefer warm (70-90F), damp environments, and are often found in books, paper products, wallpaper, and cloth. They may also be found in kitchens and pantries feeding on flour and starchy foods.

Firebrats like very warm (90+F), damp environments and are most commonly found near furnace rooms, fireplaces, chimneys, and ovens.

Where silverfish and firebrats are present, you may find live or dead insects, feces, scales, or feeding damage on paper products.



## Prevention

Damp environments provide habitat for silverfish and firebrats. Laundry rooms and bathrooms should be kept clean and dry. Plug or putty holes or spaces around pipes and repair leaks or drips in plumbing.

Store books, magazines, documents, and other paper products in dry areas. Avoid leaving books and magazines undisturbed on bookcases for extended periods of time. Keep food in pantries and kitchens in closed containers with tight-fitting lids.



## Control Options

Before attempting to control a silverfish or firebrat infestation, it is important to first conduct a thorough inspection, noting where the infestation is most severe. If you find issues with leaks, moisture, food sources, or cracks and crevices, resolve them first to reduce the likelihood of infestation.

Insecticides are most effective against silverfish and firebrat infestation when applied to areas where the insects are usually seen. Pay particular attention to cracks and crevices, such as baseboards, door and window frames, cracks and crevices, openings for pipes under sinks, and beneath cabinets.

Insecticide dusts may be used in attics, crawlspaces, basements, and other areas where they will not pose a hazard to humans or pets. Insecticides currently approved for use against silverfish and firebrats include pyrethrins and synthetic pyrethroids such as allethrin, permethrin, and resmethrin.

It is safer to use aerosol insecticides in exposed areas of the home where pets and small children may encounter dusts or baits. Never use aerosols near electric motors, gas

pilot flames, or other places where they may create a fire hazard.

Proper and thorough insecticide application will show results in a few days to a few weeks. If silverfish or firebrat infestation continues, it is likely the insects are coming from an untreated area. You will need to re-inspect your home and treat any areas that continue to be infested.

Always follow label directions when using insecticides.

## How We Can Help

The District does not provide chemical control for silverfish or firebrats. However, the District laboratory may be able to identify silverfish or firebrat samples brought to the District office in a sealed bag or vial.

## San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District

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Monday-Friday  
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