



Millipedes

Eric Day, Manager, Insect Identification Laboratory

DESCRIPTION: Millipedes range from 1 to 4 inches (25.4-100mm) and are usually dark brown. Millipedes are slow crawling, round-bodied pests, which have two sets of legs on each body segment. Millipedes develop best in damp and dark locations with abundant organic matter (food). They often curl up into a tight "C" shape, like a watch spring, and remain motionless when touched. The body is long and cylindrical.



Millipedes on glue board. *Gary Alpert, Harvard University, Bugwood.org*

HABITAT: Millipedes have caused some problems around Virginia in the summer and fall. Areas around houses that provide these conditions include piles of grass clippings, a wooded lot close to the house, excessive mulch around the house, and similar locations.

LIFE CYCLE: They lay eggs in the spring and populations build up during the summer. Under good conditions (adequate food and habitat), populations can become very large. Then changes in the habitat (excessive moisture, lack of food, too little moisture) cause the population to disperse.

TYPE OF DAMAGE: May infest a basement and other parts of the house in the fall.

CONTROL: Rake and reduce mulch and excess grass clipping near the house. Correct any drainage or moisture problems. Insecticides are only partially effective but will help in severe situations. Nonchemical control measures, such as looking for the source of the problem, may be useful but not always possible or effective. Populations of millipedes may build to large numbers in one year, the habitat become overcrowded, and thousands of them migrate to other areas.

INTERESTING FACTS: There were several locations in which the numbers of millipedes were so excessive that they swarmed over mulched flower beds and invaded basements and other ground level rooms in houses. At times there can be thousands of millipedes moving across lawn areas and into houses.