



## EXOPEST: FLOUR MITE FACT SHEET

Flour mites (*Acarus siro*) are very tiny little creatures, but they can still be pests. A flour mite, sometimes called a grain mite, appears harmless. It is just a little over a tenth of an inch long. It has a soft white body, and like all mites, it has eight legs, except in the larval stage when it has only six legs. The legs are pinkish to brownish in color. Whenever there is a severe infestation of these pests, the surface they are on appears to be covered with a fine dust.

You're unlikely to want to eat any dry goods visibly infested with these mites, and you may even be hesitant to do so after brushing or washing them away, but these flour pests are harmless if eaten. The chances are you've knowingly or unknowingly eaten a mite or two in the past, just as you may have ingested an occasional gnat or other tiny creature. There are a few people who are allergic to *A. siro*, although having a mite allergy is somewhat rare. Those that do have a mite allergy are usually allergic to mite bites, **but these particular mites don't bite.**



### Life Cycle of the Flour Mite

A flour mite doesn't live for long. Its life span can be as short as 9 days or as long as a month, depending upon various conditions. The life cycle starts with the egg. A female mite will lay up to 30 eggs per day for a period of several weeks. The maximum number of eggs a female will lay during her lifetime can approach 800. It is obvious then that even if these little bugs don't live long, a colony of them can grow to very large numbers and can be present in one location for a long time.

Once an egg has hatched, the flour mite enters its larval, or juvenile, stage. Most will eventually emerge from this stage as adults. A few however will develop small suction-like appendages, which allow them to hitch rides on pets, boxes, or whatever is moving by and thereby travel to another location. Most adults will stay put, as long as a food source is available.

### Getting Rid of Flour Mites

While they are distantly related to the flea, flour mites are not quite as difficult to get rid of. Still, when you are trying to eliminate these arthropods, you have the different life cycle phases to deal with. While a pesticide used by Exopest will take care of them in short term, that involves the spraying of shelves on both sides of each shelf and perhaps dusting areas above that location, other areas could be where wheat bags are stored. You will first need to remove all of the food items, which can mean cleaning out a pantry or emptying a grain bin or any areas where cereals nuts raisins etc are stored. When packages of flour, cereals, or grain are returned, it needs to be made certain that there are no mites present in these foods or on the packaging and to put all items in sealable plastic containers even brand new items, or the problem can start all over again.