

Woodlice



Profile/Characteristics

Woodlice are common inhabitants of woodlands and gardens. There are about 35 species of woodlice in the UK.

Some woodlice come indoors, especially during the cooler autumn and winter weather, and of those, the one most likely to be seen is the common or garden woodlouse, (Porcellio Scaber).

Woodlice are not insects but small crustaceans, the same class of animal which includes crabs, lobsters and prawns. Most crustaceans live in water but a few live on land. Because of the way they breathe using gills, they need to live in damp places such as under stones and flower pots.

Life Cycle

After mating, a female woodlouse produces up to 150 eggs which are held within her body until the young hatch.

Newly hatched woodlice are white and about 2mm long. They moult several times as they grow, reaching full size, about 15mm long, in a year.

Woodlice in Houses

Wood lice in houses are entirely casual visitors, searching usually for some protection from the start of the cold weather, and encouraged by the build up of vegetation in pot plants, or other suitable places immediately outside the house.

They can cause a small amount of damage to plant leaves by chewing them but do not bite and present no risk to human beings.

Preventative Measures

Control of woodlice indoors can be achieved simply by cleaning the room. Woodlice do not breed indoors. They can be excluded from a room by sealing potential entry points.

Removal of vegetation and rubbish from areas adjacent to the house can also help.

Householders should also deal with any damp patches that may occur. Odd woodlice which are found indoors should simply be placed outside.