

Asian Lady Beetles

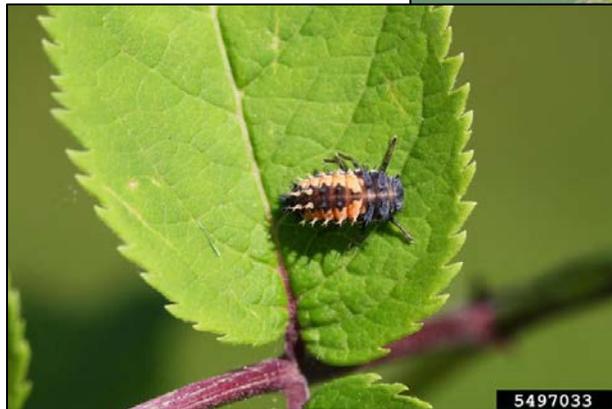
By: Dr. Laura A. Griffeth, County Extension Coordinator, Webster County, and ANR Agent, Webster and Stewart County

As I sat down to write this article, a joke kept coming to mind. What's white and black and red/read all over? Of course it's our wonderful newspapers. But what I've been thinking about this week are lady beetles, or more specifically the multicolored Asian lady beetle.

Those small red/orange and black lady beetles are everywhere right now. Lori told me that she hasn't seen them this bad in her house in years. They can be distinguished from regular lady bugs by the "W" or "M" on their pronotum, or the area just behind their head. Lady bugs don't have this mark. The Asian lady beetle larvae look like small, spiny alligators with a blue-black body and two rows of orange to reddish spots on its back.

Asian lady beetle (note W behind head) - Daren Mueller, Iowa State University, Bugwood.org

Asian lady beetle larvae - Steven Katovich, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org



Unfortunately there is very little that can be done to control these ornery pests. During the spring and summer these lady beetles can be found in the fields and gardens. They even feed on aphids and scale insects and are extremely beneficial to ag crops and horticultural crops.

The problem is in the fall and winter. As temperatures cool down, these lady beetles are searching for a place to ride out the winter in warmth. And often that means in your house. They look for overwintering sites on the sunnier sides of buildings or light-colored buildings. Some researchers are studying whether they're attracted to certain chemicals or other odors.

Once they've got a location, they start moving inside. They can fit through very small holes, cracks, and even attic vents. They hibernate as adults often in the wall vents because they can't survive in the heated rooms of a house, but they do not reproduce inside. On warmer days they may become active and move towards light and bright surfaces, often windows, light fixtures, and ceilings.

Fortunately they are only a nuisance. They do not eat wood or furniture. They may stain furnishings if smashed. In large numbers they may trigger allergies or asthmatic reactions, though that has not been proven. However, control can seem impossible.

There are no pesticides that can kill once lady beetles are inside your house. You can't reach where the lady beetles really are, even with bombs or foggers. The best control for lady beetles is exclusion. You have to keep them out of the house before they move in, preferably in late summer. Below are some helpful tips.

- *Adjust or install tight-fitting sweeps or thresholds at the bottom of exterior doors.

- *Install weather-stripping around other parts of the doorframe.

- *Seal utility openings where air conditioner pipes, phone, cable TV and other wires enter the foundation and siding. Holes can be plugged with caulk, cement, urethane foam, or copper mesh. Steel wool may be used, but it may rust and possibly stain siding if it is exposed to the weather.

- *Caulk around windows, doors, siding and fascia boards.

- *Keep window screens in good condition and install insect screening behind attic gable vents.

Your best choice (basically your only choice) now is to vacuum them up. Make sure you take your vacuum bag out soon after, or they can crawl out and bother you again. Some people will actually put them in a sealed container and place them outside then release them into the gardens next spring to use as beneficials.

So let's look at the positives of this situation and not the negatives. While they are a pain now, they will go away – eventually. If you have any questions about this topic or any other agricultural topic, please call your local county Extension office or call me at the Webster County Extension Office at 229-828-2325.