

# Silverfish

Silverfish are harmless, but these grayish-blue, serpentine creatures aren't pleasant to have around the house. They feed on the bindings of books, dead skin cells and other starchy materials and thrive in dark, wet spaces.

Since silverfish are nocturnal, you may not see them during the day. Rather, you'll probably become aware of their presence because of what they leave behind. Look for damp, dark areas with small spots of excrement that look like black pepper. Small holes and yellowish stains on clothing, wallpaper, cereal boxes and other cardboard or fabric materials.

Try newspaper traps – Roll up a newspaper, band the ends with elastic and moisten it. Set it out where you often see silverfish droppings before you go to bed. In the morning, silverfish will have eaten their way into the newspaper, since you've provided them with both food and a cozy environment. Without unrolling the newspaper, throw it away or burn it. Depending on the severity of your problem you may need to set them out several nights in a row and repeat until you don't see them anymore.

## Preventing Silverfish from returning

Dehumidify your home. Since silverfish love damp places, reducing the humidity in your home is a sure way to keep them out. Buy a dehumidifier and try to reduce the humidity in your home. If you don't want to use a dehumidifier, run the air conditioner or at least keep the fans on.

Caulk all cracks and crevices where they could lay eggs. If your house is full of dark, damp cracks and crevices, filling these is a good way to keep silverfish out. Buy some caulk and apply it along baseboards, inside cracks, and in holes in your wall or floor.

Remove food sources from your house. Keeping your floor clear of silverfish food may help keep their population down. Don't leave a pile of books on the floor and clean up your dirty laundry before it sits there too long. In addition to these primary food sources, consider the following sources that may be a factor.

- Cardboard boxes. Store your boxes on shelves instead of the floor where they're more likely to get damp.
- Food containers. Keep your food in sealed plastic containers instead of boxes.
- Wallpaper. If you've got old wallpaper, consider replacing it with paint or new wallpaper, silverfish love to eat starchy material the adhesive is made out of.
- Old clothing. If you store your out of season clothing in your basement or a dark closet, consider placing it in plastic bags to keep the silverfish out.

Vacuum your house often. Vacuuming helps to keep their food sources down and sucks eggs out of the carpet and baseboards. Vacuum at least once a week.



## Silverfish Facts

### Identification

Domestic silverfish are common inhabitants of houses and are often found in dark sheltered areas. They are wingless with a long soft body covered in silvery-grey scales. They have long antennae and three long abdominal cerci (tails) - a long central one, and one on either side at right angles to the body. The eyes are small and compound.

### Size

body length 15mm

### Habitat

species found in homes are found in dark, undisturbed places such as in cupboards and bookshelves.

### Food

silverfish are common in most houses where they feed mainly on paper and fabric found around the home

### Breeding

The female lays eggs which hatch into nymphs that look like small versions of the adults. The young develop over a series of molts. Silverfish molt throughout their lives and individuals may live for up to 4 years.

### Range

introduced - found throughout Australia

### Classification

Class: Insecta  
Order: Thysanura  
Family: Lepismatidae  
Genus: Ctenolepisma  
Species: longicaudata  
Common Name: **Silverfish**