

Fighting the Beetles: Protecting Your Cigars from Infestation

Your cigar box may be at risk of a secret predator. Many cigar aficionados have been shocked and repulsed at finding their treasured cigars infested with *Lasioderma Serricorne*, also known as tobacco beetles. This dreaded beetle feeds on your precious cigars. They don't care if your cigars are drugstore mass-market brands, or imported beauties.

What is the tobacco beetle, and where does it come from? The tobacco beetle exists in all countries where tobacco is produced. It thrives on tobacco plants, infesting their leaves before it is processed. Tobacco beetles thrive in hot climates, and especially in the warm countries Caribbean countries where much of the world's tobacco is produced. Tobacco beetles lay larvae that are white and up to 4 mm long. When the larvae hatch, they produce moths that proceed to hungrily eat their way through the tobacco leaves. Unfortunately, the tobacco beetle has been known to survive the process of fermentation and production that is used to make most cigars. Although many countries have made the effort to rid their tobacco crops of this dreaded pest, mostly by spraying crops with gases, the tobacco beetle has proven highly resistant.

If the tobacco beetle survives into the finished product, many cigar enthusiasts may open their cigar boxes to find that their cigars have been eaten through. Sometimes the presence of the tobacco beetle can be detected through the presence of small puncture-like holes on the wrapper. The holes can make an average cigar resemble a flute.

What can you do if you find your cigars infested with the tobacco beetle? Research has shown that your microwave may be your best defense in destroying the tobacco beetle larvae. Before using your microwave, remove and dispose of any infested cigar from your collection. The rest of your cigars can be treated. In order to rid the remaining of your collection of this pest, you should make sure to microwave your cigars together, never individually. Microwave them for about three minutes. After being warmed, immediately place the cigars into the freezer. After freezing them for 24 hours, remove them and allow them to thaw at room temperature. After they have thawed completely, place them in a humidor. This treatment has proven effective in removing the presence of the tobacco beetle. Before removing a cigar from the humidor to be smoked, examine each cigar individually. If the cigar shows no evidence of infestation, it is safe to smoke.

