Few things are more upsetting than insects in your food. The insects may carry germs, and they may make food taste bad. Beetles, moths, and other insects eat dried foods including beans, peas, nuts, flour, corn, cereals, pasta and spices. They also eat birdseed and pet food.

These pests usually come home in dried foods that you buy. A few of the insects may be in the food already and they can quickly multiply and move from the infested packages into other foods stored nearby. Store birdseed and dried pet food in tightly sealed containers away from your family food.

The following 4 steps will help you keep insects out of your food:

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Call your Local Cooperative Extension Service office. Visit our Websites: www.gafamilies.com www.entomology.ent.uga.edu

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Gale A. Buchanan, Dean and Director

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STORE FOOD PROPERLY

STEP 1
Unless you plan to eat dried foods right away, keep them in the refrigerator/freezer or store them in tightly sealed containers. Sealed plastic bags will keep out most insects. Freezing keeps the insects out, and it will kill any insects in the food before they can multiply. Sealing the food in a plastic bag before you place it in the freezer will help keep the food fresh. Freezing will not hurt beans/peas, flour, corn meal, cereals, birdseed, or other dry foods. Storing foods in the refrigerator will keep insects from developing, but it may not kill them. The freezer is a better choice for long-term storage.

KEEP INSECTS OUT!

STEP 2
Inspect food before buying. If you buy foods from an open bin, look for insects, webbing, or insect damage. Look for holes or webs on the packages of cake mix, cereals, or flour. Tell the store manager if you see any sign of insects.

Keep food storage cabinets and pantries clean. Clean flour and other food spills from the shelving and floor often. Keep food out of cracks and holes in shelves so the food does not attract insects.

Special vacuum cleaner tips can help you clean food from cracks and holes. After cleaning, seal the cracks and holes with caulk.

FIND THE SOURCE!

STEP 3
If you have a problem with pests in dried foods, you will see insects, insect parts, or webs. You may see many small moths in your food cabinet. Look in all of your dried food products to find the source. If you do not find the source of the insects, the problem will not go away.

Use your vacuum cleaner to suck up any insects you see; the vacuum cleaner will kill them. If you find foods with insects in them, throw the food away. Tie up the trash bag and take the trash outside. If you bought the food recently, place the item in the freezer until you can return it to the store for a refund or replacement.

Birdseed or pet food with insects in it will not harm birds or other animals, but the birds or pets may refuse to eat the food.

STEP 4
In most cases, you will not need to use pesticides to control these types of pests. Never spray areas where food may come in contact with pesticides. You might make your family sick!

What if my baby ate a bug?
If you think that you have eaten an insect or insect parts that got into your dried foods, do not panic. This small addition to your meal will probably have no effect on you. If you feel sick or worried about it, talk to your doctor or local health department.

BE CAREFUL WITH PESTICIDES!

Take special care to store this animal food in a tightly sealed bag away from the family food. If the problem does not go away, the insects are finding food. Go through your food pantry again, paying special attention to the unopened boxes and bags of food. Open cardboard boxes of rice and pasta. Seal the food in plastic bags and place the bags back in the box. Look at bags of cake mix and inspect for small cracks or holes where insects may have entered.

Until you solve the problem, buy only the amount of dried foods that you will eat quickly or that you can store in the refrigerator or freezer. If the problem still does not go away, catch some of the insects and take them to your county Extension office for identification.