

BOW bugs!

Adult varied carpet beetle



Bow bugs, also known as carpet beetles and bow mites, can be members of several species of the

Dermestidae family, in the larval stage. They're fairly common, even in scrupulously clean homes, and they love to eat bow hair as well as wool. If your bow hair is getting brittle or breaking in the middle, bow bugs have infested your case. If your case has bow bugs, you will need to have the bow rehaired professionally, and you or the luthier will need to clean and disinfect your case. Then you should follow some easy steps to ensure that they don't come back.

It is important not to store your bow in an unopened case for long periods of time, because bow bugs do best in dark, enclosed places.

Get rid of them

1. Vacuum your case thoroughly, at least twice (or have the violin shop do this).
2. Leave your case open in a well-ventilated, bright area for a day or two.
3. Take your bow to be rehaired professionally. If the hair isn't yet broken, be sure to tell them about the bugs so they can take steps to protect the other bows and cases. (They won't think you're bad for having bow bugs; they've seen many before.)

Larva of Anthrenus carpet beetle



Keep them from coming back

1. You can try putting cedar chips or moth balls wrapped in cloth in the case, but nos. 2 and 3 below are most important. **Don't** use an insecticide spray; the residue could damage your violin and bow.
2. Make a practice of periodically leaving your case open in a well-ventilated, bright area.
3. Keep your case open when you practice.

