



# Ladybugs

## Pest Note



Photos courtesy of: Dr. Henri Goulet, Canadian National Collection of Insects



Photos: Dr. Henri Goulet, Canadian National Insect Library

### Ladybugs—what are they?

Ladybugs, also called lady beetles or lady birds, with their characteristic dome shape, orange-red bodies and black spots, are among our most familiar insects. The main physical difference between the various species in Canada is the number of black spots on their wing covers (e.g., the two-spotted and thirteen-spotted lady beetles).

Multicoloured Asian lady beetles, a specific type of ladybug, were introduced in North America in the 1970s to control aphids and other crop-eating insects. Their vigorous reproductive cycle and ability to withstand fairly harsh winters has helped them become a predominant species in Canada. They are slightly larger than native species, typically 6 to 10 mm long and range in colour from a mustard yellow to a dark, reddish orange. They have a varying number of black spots on their wing covers, and some may not have any spots. The multicoloured Asian lady beetle also has two white oval markings on either side of its head, and usually has an M-shaped marking just behind its head. As with many other insects their bold colours are a defence, warning birds and other predators that they will not make a tasty meal.

### What can they do?

Ladybugs are among our most beneficial insects. They are voracious and efficient predators of insect pests, and feed on more than 50 species of aphids. A single ladybug will consume thousands of insects pest in its lifetime, helping to protect home gardens as well as valuable commercial orchards and vegetable crops.

Ladybugs do not sting, transmit disease or infest food supplies. Of the more than 450 species of ladybugs in North America, only three types feed on plants. However one species, the multicoloured Asian lady beetle, has increasingly become a cause of complaints. That is because they gather in large numbers in the fall, looking for a safe place to spend the winter. Attracted to homes and buildings with sunny exposures, they will cluster on outside walls and eventually work their way indoors through cracks and openings. Their sheer numbers make them a serious nuisance for some homeowners.

Throughout the summer, ladybugs feed on soft bodied insects such as aphids and mealybugs. As fall nears and the temperatures drop, most ladybug species prepare for winter on the forest floor often at the base of trees, under bark, leaves or other debris.

Ladybugs are attracted to sunny areas, including homes and buildings where they will congregate in the hundreds even thousands seeking warmth and a sheltered place to spend the winter. Homes near fields or forested areas are particularly susceptible. After clustering on outside walls, many will work their way into the dwelling through gaps in door and window frames, eaves, utility openings, foundations and wall siding. Once inside they become confused and gather on the walls, ceilings and around windows looking for an exit. Most of these stragglers die within a short time, but others may find a safe spot to hibernate in the attic or wall voids, emerging from time to time during mild weather.



Ladybugs prey on aphids. Photo: Clemson University, USDA Cooperative Extension Slide Series, Bugwood.org



Ladybugs prey on Mealybugs. Photo: United States National Collection of Scale Insects Photographs Archive, USDA ARS, Bugwood.org

### Responsible Pesticide Use

#### Before Purchasing a Pesticide

- Identify the pest correctly.
- Use physical control methods and alternatives to pesticides.
- Read the label directions and safety precautions before buying the product. The label must include the name of the pest to be controlled and the treatment location (e.g., indoor, outdoor, garden uses, pet treatment).
- Purchase only the quantity of product needed for the treatment.
- Consider hiring a licensed pest control operator.

#### Using a Pesticide

- Carefully read all label instructions and precautions before using pesticides.
- Do not drink, eat or smoke while applying pesticides.
- Persons and pets should vacate the area during treatment. Cover or remove aquaria.
- If kitchen area is to be treated, cover or remove food, dishes and utensils.

#### After Using a Pesticide

- Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling any pesticide product.



A larger invasion can be expected for several days in the late winter or early spring, when they leave their winter hiding spots and try to move outdoors to mate. Ladybugs produce several generations each year, the adult females lay clusters of 10 to 50 tiny light yellow eggs near aphid colonies. The larvae are spiny and mostly black with orange stripes resembling tiny alligators. These larvae share the adults' insatiable appetite for aphids.

## How can I manage them?

### Exclusion

Preventing ladybugs from entering buildings is the only way to control them. Exclusion techniques including caulking and weather stripping can keep them outdoors where they belong. Focus on the sunny southwest sides of the home, as shady areas are much less affected.

- Fix screens and caulk around windows and door jams.
- Seal any cracks and crevices in the siding and the foundation.
- Plug holes in roofing, vents and attic walls.
- Inspect and seal gaps in service utility entrances.

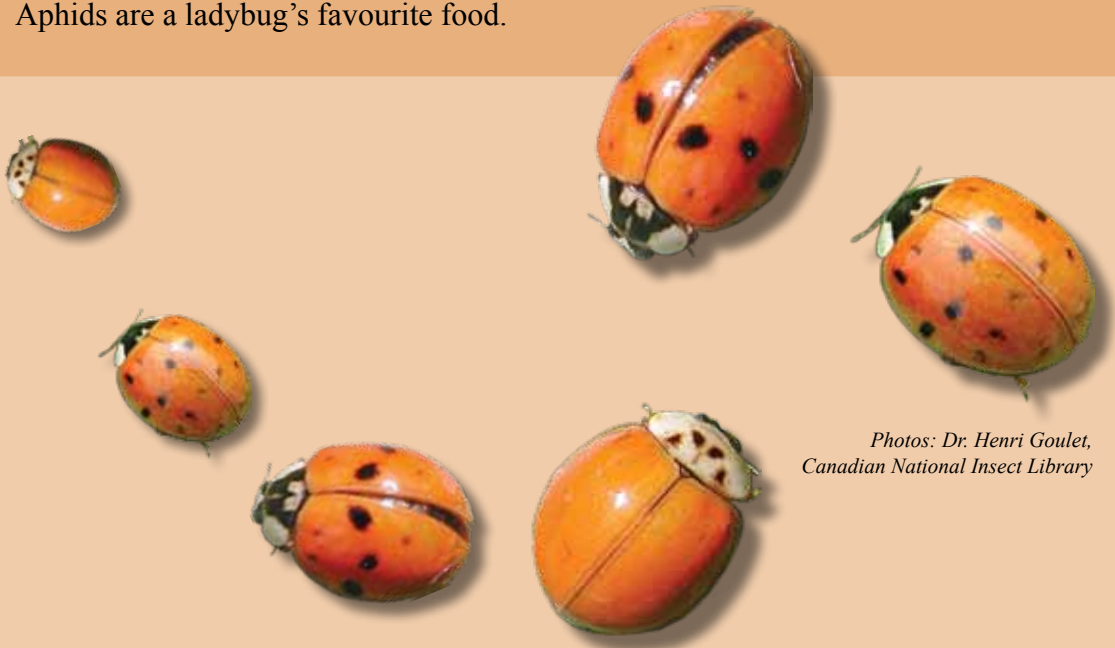
Once ladybugs have moved in, there are few treatment options. The best method is to simply sweep or vacuum them up, then seal and discard the bag so they can't escape back into the home.

### Products

No pesticides are currently registered for the control of ladybugs.

### Did you know...

- Ladybugs can live up to two to three years if the conditions are right.
- During hibernation, ladybugs feed on their stored fat.
- The spots on a ladybug fade as the ladybug gets older.
- Ladybugs can secrete a fluid from joints in their legs, which gives them a foul taste. Their colouring is likely a reminder to any animals that their taste will be foul. A threatened ladybug may play dead and secrete the unappetizing substance to protect itself.
- Ladybugs chew from side to side and not up and down like people do.
- A ladybug beats its wings 85 times a second when it flies.
- Aphids are a ladybug's favourite food.



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### Health Canada Pest Management Regulatory Agency

2720 Riverside Drive, Ottawa ON K1A 0K9  
 Phone from inside Canada: 1-800-267-6315  
 Phone from outside Canada: 613-736-3799 (long distance charges apply)  
 Fax: 613-736-3798  
[www.healthcanada.gc.ca/pmra](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/pmra)

- Do not permit persons or pets to contact treated surfaces until residue has dried completely.
  - Provide adequate ventilation of treated areas after use.
  - Wipe clean all surfaces that come in direct contact with food, such as counters, tables and stovetops, including indoor and outdoor surfaces.
  - Always store pesticides out of reach of children and pets and away from food and beverages.
- ### Accidental Poisoning
- Call a poison control centre immediately and seek medical attention.
  - Take the pesticide container or label with you to the emergency facility or physician.
  - Follow first aid statements on the label.
  - In case of accidental poisoning of pets seek veterinary attention immediately.
  - Report pesticide incidents to manufacturers (phone number on label). They are required to send them to Health Canada.
- ### Disposing of Pesticides
- Do not reuse empty pesticide containers. Wrap and dispose of in household garbage.
  - Follow the product label instructions or contact provincial authorities for disposal of pesticides.

**Note:** These are general recommendations. Consult the label for specific instructions. When in doubt, contact a professional.

### Health Canada

Pest Management Regulatory Agency  
[www.healthcanada.gc.ca/pmra](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/pmra)  
 1-800-267-6315



Seal areas where ladybugs can get into your home.  
 Photo: Brock Fenton



Caulk around windows and door jams.

