

Larvae Identification



Greater stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*)

A fully-grown stag beetle larva can be up to 11cm long. They are fairly smooth skinned have orange head and legs and brown jaws. They are quite chunky, and the gut contents can sometimes be seen through the skin in the lower half, giving the appearance of a blackish patch along the back. This is particularly in smaller larvae, which have less fat. They are nearly always found in rotten or rotting wood below ground and can be up to 50cm down. Placed on the ground they take up a C shape.



Lesser stag beetle (*Dorcus parallelipipedus*)

The lesser stag is the most easily mistaken for a stag beetle larva, since it also has the same orange head, similar legs and brown jaws, and comes to rest in the same C shape. It is virtually impossible to distinguish a small stag beetle from a lesser stag beetle larva without resorting to classification guides and a hand lens. However, as a general rule, the lesser larva will be found above ground and in wood, often in great numbers. There are also often lesser stag beetle adults present, near to the larvae.



House longhorn beetle (*Hylotrupes bajulus*)

The longhorn larva is quite different from a stag beetle larva in that the body and head appear to be merged and the head is altogether squarer and smaller. The larva also has a flattened appearance. They are found above ground. the larvae are found deep into wood, which is not necessarily rotting, although dead, and they don't form large cavities but rather long tubes within the wood.



Rose chafer (*Cetonia aurata*)

These larvae are smaller (approximately 2cm) and much hairier than stag beetle larvae. Their legs are shorter and the larvae have a chubby appearance. When placed on a flat surface the larva will turn on to its back and move along rapidly. Their orange heads are smaller than those of a stag beetle larva. The rose chafer larva is most likely to be found in compost heaps in large numbers – sometimes hundreds.



Cockchafer (*Melolontha melolontha*)

These have the appearance of poorly nourished stag beetle larvae. They have long legs and are quite hairy though not as hairy as the chafer. Their heads are also smaller than the stag beetle larva. If placed on the ground they run as if their rear end was in a sack. These are root feeders, which are most commonly found in lawns rather than in rotting wood. They can be quite numerous over an area of lawn.



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Male stag beetle pupa (*Lucanus cervus*)

The pupae of beetles look much more similar to each other. There is also the disadvantage that they are not moving and therefore they are much harder to differentiate. Except in male stag beetle pupae which have very distinctive antlers. They are approximately 35 - 60mm in length. These pupae are found underground, away from wood, between August and September



Female stag beetle pupa (*Lucanus cervus*)

The female stag beetle pupa is a similar size to that of the male.

All other beetles produce smaller pupae but it can be very hard to distinguish the species otherwise. Lesser stag beetle pupae are found inside wood.

