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species

Larval identification

Stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*)

A fully-grown stag beetle larva can be up to 8cm long. They have an orange head and legs and brown jaws. They are quite chunky, and the content of their guts can sometimes be seen through the skin in the lower half, giving the appearance of a blackish patch along the back. This is particularly visible in smaller larvae, which have less fat.

They are nearly always found below ground, up to 50cm down. If they are placed on the ground they will be in a C shape.



Deborah Harvey

Lesser stag beetle (*Dorcus parallelipedus*)

The lesser stag is the most easily mistaken for a stag beetle larva, with 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.



Colin Hawes

Cockchafer (*Melolontha melolontha*)

These are thinner than stag beetle larvae. They have long legs and are quite hairy though not as hairy as the rose chafer. Their heads are also smaller than stag beetle larvae heads.

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 associated with rotting wood. There are often many found over an area of lawn.



Julie Scott

Rose chafer larvae (*Getonia 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.



Lee Ilyas

Longhorn beetles (various species from the *Cerambycidae* family)

The longhorn larva is quite different from a stag beetle larva. 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, deep into deadwood, which is not necessarily rotting. They don't form large cavities but rather long tubes within the wood.



Colin Hawes

For more detailed information please visit www.ptes.org/stagbeetle