

Clothes moth infestations can be frustrating to deal with. We hope the following will help you find a solution.

How to spot a clothes moth infestation

The signs are not often apparent until you discover damage caused to clothes or carpets. Note that clothes moths primarily seek out animal-based fabrics, as well as fur, hair, leather, feathers and taxidermy. However, the larvae will also eat lint, dust, cotton and linen because they often contain oils, sweat and organic debris.

Some other signs of a clothes moth infestation include: silky tunnels or strands on clothing, blankets and rugs; excessive shedding from furs, bare patches on wool rugs, especially in little-used areas of the rug; small crusty accumulations on fabrics, rugs and clothing (the same colour of the fabric).; and of course, adult moths flying or crawling away when you remove or disturb fabric or take clothes from storage.

Species

There are five species of moth in the UK that can attack textiles. Two are the primary pests seen in households; The Webbing Clothes Moth (*Tineola bisselliella*) and the Casemaking Clothes Moth (*Tinea pellionella*). Both can be treated in the same way. The only difference worth noting is that the larvae of Casemaking Clothes Moths create small, fibrous tubes that cling to the material they eat. Both adult moths have cream coloured wings and bodies. A lesser problem limited to London and the South-East is the Pale-backed Clothes Moth (*Monopis crocipitella*) although it is not clear how much damage these cause. Two other species only cause damage if textile is left undisturbed for long periods; the Brown House Moth (*Hofmannophila pseudospretella*) and the White Shouldered House Moth (*Endrosis sarcitrella*).

Life cycle

Clothes moths like dark, undisturbed areas to eat, mate and reproduce. That is why they are often found in wardrobes, attics and other areas within a house that are unused for long periods. Fabric moths like dark places. They tend to scuttle around and only fly when warm. Eggs and larvae are most often found around the edges of a room and beneath heavy or long-standing furniture. Eggs hatch in about 4 to 10 days in the summer and three or more weeks in the winter. After hatching, the larvae seek out a food source, and eat until they transform via a pupa into adults. The larvae and pupa of clothes moths can survive for months without food, which makes eliminating an infestation difficult. The entire clothes moth life cycle usually takes four to six months, so there may be two or even three complete life cycles in year.

Treatment – a step by step approach

Do not neglect the housekeeping

Shake: Inspect all clothes and rugs. Any material with possible larval presence, should be taken outside and thoroughly shaken (or shaken inside followed by a quick vacuum). This should dislodge active larvae or moths.

Vacuum: Vacuum as much as possible. Vacuum carpets, rugs, furniture and storage areas. Treat spaces before putting any clothes or fabrics back into their normal storage areas such as wardrobes, drawers, and chests. Pay special attention to any cracks, crevices or dusty areas where eggs and larvae may be accumulating. The cleaner a place is, the less likely the infestation will return.

Launder: To eliminate most of the larvae and moths in clothing, wash on a high temperature of 60°C.

Freeze: Many fabrics simply cannot be washed at 60°C. For those items, seal them in a plastic bag and put in a freezer for 2 weeks at -20°C. The intensely cold temperatures will kill eggs, larvae and moths.

NB: Once finished with the vacuum, take the vacuum machine outside, remove the dust bag, seal in a plastic bag and throw in the household rubbish. For bagless vacuums, empty contents into a bag and dispose. Remember, larvae can survive in dust, so remove the vacuum debris out of your property.

Managing Clothes Moths



Consider the following products

The following products are all available from Historyonics. A combination of products is usually required. The more pressure that can be applied to clothes moths to disrupt their lives, the more success can be achieved.

Target the flying adult moths. Carry out a space treatment with a room fogger. Protector Natural Total Release Aerosols or room foggers will control adult moths and larvae exposed to the treatment. Seal doors and windows, but open doors to cupboards and wardrobes. Leave for 2 hours and ventilate for at least 30mins before re-entering.



Place pheromone traps. The Pheromoth™ Trap is pre-baited with the pheromone for Webbing Clothes Moths. After 12 weeks, dispose and replace. The Demi Diamond system also contains the same pheromone and comes in two parts, a triangular holder and replacement card. Each card last 12 weeks. Use 2 per average size room and up to 4 in large rooms. A separate pheromone dispenser (and trap) is available for use for Case-bearing Clothes Moths.



Target the larvae. Treat the places where larvae are active, or which you wish to protect, with Constrain. It is advisable and recommended to test a small amount of product on an inconspicuous area to be treated first. 1 Litre of product will treat up to 40m². Apply a light spray around the sides of rooms, the underside of rugs, inside surfaces of wardrobes and drawers (with clothes removed) and between floorboards where gaps exist. Move furniture away from walls (eg beds) as required to treat the hidden areas. Repeat as required.



Voids and dry inaccessible spaces can be treated with a DE Powder to provide a residual treatment to control larvae that may be living on accumulated fibres that may have built up over time under floorboards or under or behind wardrobes



Protect clothes once returned to storage with moth killer and repellent products. There are a couple of modern alternatives to moth balls. The Zero-In Clothes Moth Strips are insecticide-impregnated paper sheets that can be hung on railings or placed in drawers. There are twenty sheets per pack and ten sheets treat 1m³ of space and last 6 months. The Zero-In Hanging Moth Proofer (2 per pack) is designed for wardrobe use and lasts 4 months. Use 1 unit in a small wardrobe.



Always follow the label instructions for any product and use pesticides safely. More products are available from Historyonics. A full list of our current range is available at www.historyonics.com.

Preventing clothes moths reoccurring

To avoid or reduce future infestations of clothes moths, consider the following:

Reduce the number of fabrics: If you have a lot of clothes that rarely get worn, or fabric materials unused, consider reducing these to remove harbourages for moths.

Keep items clean: Always wash your clothes after they have been worn for any period of time. Even wearing an article for a few hours can deposit a layer of skin oils that could attract moths to your clothing.

Hang rather than stack: Clothes moths like undisturbed fabric and piles of clothes are ideal.

Seal: Any clothing that does not get regular use, have it dry-cleaned and then immediately seal it in a moth-proof container or bag. The containers do not need to be vacuum sealed.

Clean second-hand fabrics: If you regularly collect vintage clothing at a charity shops or similar, collect antique rugs and furniture or buy from car boot sales etc., launder and clean such material you acquire before storing.

Vacuum: Regularly vacuum those undisturbed storage areas. Wardrobes and other fabric-storage areas should be regularly inspected for moths and vacuumed to remove dust build-up.