



Wool, fur, felt, silk, feathers, skins, and horn all contain keratin. Once a specimen is mounted, these all become a potential foodstuff as the larvae of several insects enjoy eating keratinized proteins. They can progressively degrade a specimen by making holes, creating channels, and grazing on fur and feathers, and the debris they create can contribute to other problems such as mould growth. Few specimens are completely shielded from insect attack. Unless guaranteed airtight, even the best taxidermy cases incorporate tiny gaps - between a door and frame, through which small insects can crawl. The importance of regular inspections cannot be overstated.

The sight of adult moths and beetles is the first clue that an infestation has occurred, and once larvae emerge to feed on a mounted animal, bald patches, tracks, and broken hairs will start to become noticeable. Patches of fur may come loose or fall to the floor. All of these are signs of a pest problem that requires immediate attention.

Ironically, dermestid beetles that can aid in cleaning skulls and bones for mounting, can also destroy the material to be preserved. Unfortunately, once a mounted animal has been damaged by insects, all that can often be done is to prevent further damage. Never leave a taxidermy insect attack unchecked. Over time, the insects may lay

eggs in the furniture and carpets in the room and what was once a manageable problem can quickly become an overwhelming infestation.

Prevention is better than cure

By keeping the environment clean and inhospitable to insects, you can help keep your mounts in a flawless, undamaged condition. Place monitoring traps to detect for the presence of adult insects looking for suitable egg laying sites. Place these especially during the Spring, Summer and Autumn months. Use the Historyonics Museum Trap with the appropriate pheromone beetle lure or, for Clothes Moths, a Webbing or Case-Making Clothes Moth Trap and Lure combination.

How to eliminate a taxidermy infestation

Many older specimens were often treated with preservative solutions which are no longer available today. These not only preserved the skin but also provided protection against insect attack. Today, a more involved approach is required, but it is not impossible to ensure specimens stay insect free.

Freeze: Put affected mounts in a freezer for two weeks at -20°C to kill adults, larvae, and eggs. Do not do this with specimens that are in cases, to avoid damaging glass and wood. At the end of the period, remove from the freezer and leave, still fully wrapped, to reach room temperature. Remove wrapping only when the specimen has reached room temperature. For added security, keep wrapped and refreezing again. This will help control any eggs that may have survived the first freeze and hatched during the first thaw.

Fog: Place all mounts in a room. Seal by locking windows, closing air vents, and putting towels underneath the door. Then, set off a total release aerosol. Leave the room sealed and undisturbed for at least two hours.

Fumigate: Place the mount inside a plastic bag with a number of Zero-In Moth Killer Strips and tape the bag shut. Leave for a month to allow the strips to work. The number depends on bag volume.

To prevent future pest problems

Lightly spray specimens with Historyonics Constrain. This is a water-based, non-staining, ready to use, residual insecticide. Once treated, leave in a well-ventilated area for a few hours to dry. Then gently wipe the mount with a damp microfiber cloth, going with the fur or feather grain. Doing this every two months is a good way to protect against insect infestations.



Storing new mounts in sealed glass cases will also prevent moth infestations.

Maintain a programme of vacuum cleaning to prevent the accumulation of lint, hair, and other beetle food materials. Clean up or eliminate the source of infestation. Good housekeeping is as important in preventing carpet beetle and clothes moth infestations as it is in control. Pay close attention to areas where lint accumulates (corners, skirting boards, shelves, etc.). Be sure to dispose of the contents of the vacuum cleaner bag after you clean. Clean or dispose of infested cases, cloth, blankets and other fabrics.

Inspect specimens regularly, especially during the spring and late summer. Look for live insects or larvae, signs of new damage, and frass, or insect droppings and debris, discarded materials, and dead beetles or moths. Check the object regularly. Insects tend to lay eggs in cracks and crevices, and the larvae shun light and seek similar hiding places. A powerful torch will help in your inspection.



Remember that buying taxidermy specimens at auctions potentially could introduce pests into a main collection. Treat all new introductions with care by following the above precautions.

The information provided in this guide has been prepared to assist those involved in managing taxidermy specimens. Whilst every care has been taken to ensure that the details given are correct, Historyonics shall not be responsible to any person in respect of any inaccuracy or omission in the information contained herein.