



ENGLISH HERITAGE

TOP TIPS FOR PREVENTING CLOTHES MOTH INFESTATIONS

- 1) Identify which species you have. You can reference our 'Insect Pests Found in Historic Houses' poster for correct identification and also the various insect pest fact sheets available on our website (see the website link on page 2).
- 2) In clothing, check crevices and creases, under the folds in collars and underneath the armpits, behind lapels, in pockets and turn-ups in trousers or where items are folded. Textiles soiled with food or urine are preferentially attacked and a stained area may be more damaged than a clean one. Always ensure clothing is clean when storing in wardrobes, chest of drawers or boxes.
- 3) Keep items you don't use that often neatly stored in boxes with sealed tight lids. 'Vacuum' bags which extract air by simply using a vacuum are particularly good as they are designed to give protection against insect pests, damp and dust. They can also be used when storing larger and bulkier items for example duvets, quilts, blankets, feather-filled pillows etc and also give the additional bonus of space saving. Refer to our freezing guidelines for treating infested items (see website link on page 2).
- 4) If possible, take out and shake items hanging up inside your wardrobe at least once a month – moths hate being disturbed. The same applies to clothes stored in chest of drawers or trunks. Remove pieces of carpet in the bottom of wardrobes and airing cupboards.
- 5) Regularly vacuum around the bottom of wardrobes and any shelves paying attention around the sides – use a vacuum nozzle to 'deep clean' around the edges. This helps to prevent a build-up of dirt and debris which can provide a food source for insect pests to thrive on.
- 6) Throw away, or preferably recycle, any wool, cotton, fur or feather items that you do not use or want to keep.
- 7) Moths will live in upholstery material especially if it contains wool or horsehair. Regularly check underneath seats for signs of webbing or 'cases' and vacuum at least once a month even if there are no signs are present. Also check around piping, in deep buttons and in the seat or arm crevices.
- 8) Moth infestations can also occur in the feather stuffing found in pillows, cushions and duvets and the larvae may make holes in cotton covering material as they emerge.
- 9) Open chimneys and unused flues are a major source for moth infestations as they provide a natural home for them. Have them checked and cleaned once a year for blockages by a professional chimney sweep.

- 10) Regularly check lofts and attic eaves for bird nests. Remove and destroy any nest material found.
- 11) Moths love wool carpets but hate disturbance so the regular use of a vacuum cleaner will do more to prevent moths building up than anything else. Pay particular attention to the edges of fitted carpets using a crevice or nozzle tool as upright cleaners will not reach these areas.
- 12) Try once a month to move large items of furniture sited on carpets and vacuum thoroughly the areas underneath as well. Avoid folding carpets so that the wool pile is hidden against the floor. These dark and undisturbed areas will provide harborage and a food source for them. It will also prevent an infestation in the carpet and any other vulnerable textiles nearby which can be costly to replace.
- 13) Lastly, and most important, after cleaning rooms always take your vacuum outside and empty the contents into a black plastic bag. Seal it up and dispose of it in an outside bin. Storing a used and dirty vacuum cleaner can risk spreading any larvae or pests into another areas of your house.

These tips also apply to other insect pests, such as carpet beetles and their larvae, which can also be as destructive in damaging vulnerable materials and items in your house.

For other information on clothes moths and other insect pests, including the English Heritage 'Insect Pests Found in Historic Houses' poster, the 'Pests in Houses Great and Small' book by David Pinniger and Dee Lauder, our 'Top Tips for Preventing Clothes Moth Infestations' and 'Freezing guidelines for controlling an insect pest infestation', please refer to the English Heritage website page on the link below:

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/conservation/collections-advice-and-guidance/>

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