

CLOTHES MOTHS AND CARPET BEETLES

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Clothes Moths

Adult clothes moths are winged, buff-colored, insects about 1/2 inch long. They are weak fliers and avoid lighted areas. The female moth will lay from 100 to 300 eggs, mainly on materials of animal origin. The eggs hatch into small white caterpillars in about 5 days. Larvae will vary from 1/16 to 1/3 inch long, depending on their age. These larvae commonly feed on wool, feathers, fur, hair, upholstered furniture, leather, fish meals, milk powders, lint, dust, paper or even synthetic materials which may be soiled with oils. The complete life cycle from egg to adult may take 2 months to several years to complete.

Two types of clothes moths are common to Texas — the *casemaking clothes moth* and the *webbing clothes moth*. Larvae of the casemaking clothes moth feed from a silken case which is dragged over the surface of their food. Webbing clothes moth larvae feed within silken burrows which they spin over the fabric surface.

Considerable damage to woolens, furs and other materials may occur if preventative and/or control measures are not taken.

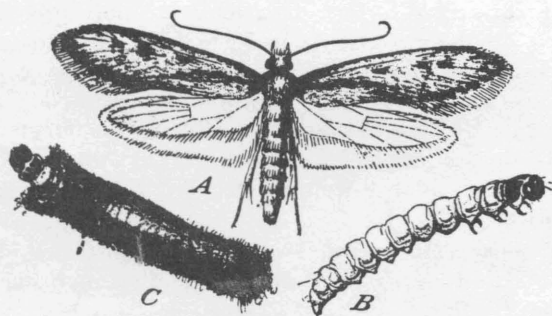


Figure 1. A, adult casemaking clothes moth; B, larva; C, larva partially concealed in its portable case. All are five times natural size.

Carpet Beetles

Adult carpet beetles are hard-shelled, oval insects about 1/8 inch long and somewhat resemble lady beetles. Adults do not eat fabrics but their presence in the springtime inside and outside the home should alert the homeowner. They may be seen crawling up the walls of infested homes and congregating on window sills.

Black carpet beetles are black with brown legs. Common carpet beetles, furniture carpet beetles and varied carpet beetles are mottled white, yellow, red and black. The body is usually covered with scales.

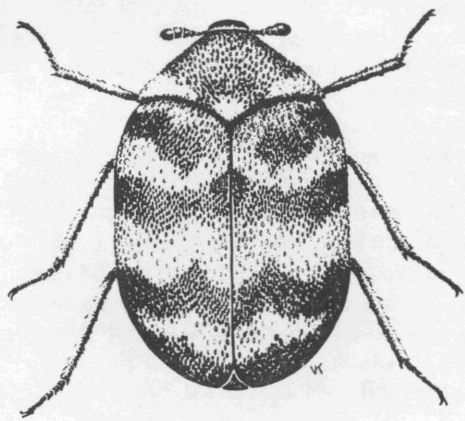


Figure 2. Adult carpet beetle.

Adult female beetles lay up to 100 eggs which hatch into larvae in 1 to 2 weeks. Larvae of the black carpet beetle are carrot-shaped, covered with brown bristles, with a tuft of long brown hair protruding from the end of the body. Larvae of other species are short, robust and covered with brown and black bristles. These larvae feed on animal products such as wool, silk, hair, fur or feather. They may feed for 9 months to 3 years, destroying carpets, felt paddings, mohair cushions, furs and many other household items. The larvae may move from one type of food to another.

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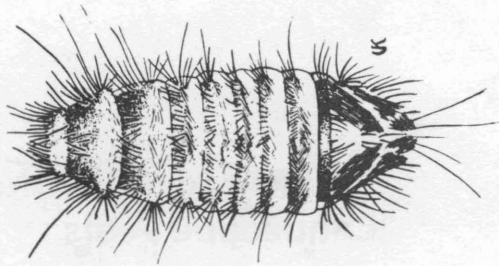


Figure 3. Mature carpet beetle larva.

Control

Good Housekeeping. The key to economic control of clothes moths and carpet beetles is good housekeeping. All furs, woolens, etc. should be sunned, brushed, or dry cleaned periodically. Sweep or vacuum regularly to remove lint, hair and dust from floors, shelves and drawers where adult clothes moths and carpet beetles may lay eggs and establish infestations. Give close attention to rugs, carpets, draperies, furniture cushions, closet corners, cracks, baseboards, moldings and other hard-to-reach places. Look for sources of infestation around the home such as old clothing, woolen scraps and yarn, furs, feather pillows and piano felts. Since clothes moth and carpet beetle larvae will feed on feathers and hair in the nests of birds and rodents, these should be destroyed.

Protective treatment of clothing, rugs, blankets and furniture. Clothing bags, tight closets, trunks and chests can be used to prevent moths and carpet beetles from reaching stored furs and woolen fabrics. Even heavy wrapping paper and tape will do. Cedar-lined closets and cedar chests have limited value in fabric pest protection unless other measures are used. One pound of naphthalene flakes or balls, or paradichlorobenzene (PDB) crystals per 100 cubic feet of closet space will provide adequate protection.

Any box or bag that is tight and can be sealed makes an adequate storage container. Place garments in containers and add PDB crystals or naphthalene flakes between sheets of paper placed in the articles. Use 1 ounce of crystals or flakes per 2 cubic feet of container space.

It is vitally important that all cloth goods be dry cleaned, washed, pressed with a hot iron, sunned or brushed prior to storage to rid them of insects.

Woolen clothing and blankets may be sprayed lightly with methoxychlor or Perthane® prior to storage. This may be applied as a coarse spray with a sprayer or ready-to-use pressurized spray container.

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Take care not to over-apply sprays. Treated materials should be dry cleaned before wearing. *Do not apply sprays to furs.* Cold storage is the most practical method of damage prevention for furs.

Rugs, carpets and pads of wool or other animal hair can become infested with clothes moths and carpet beetles, especially in areas where they extend under furniture, around heating ducts or other hard-to-clean areas. First, eliminate any moth infestation by cleaning or brushing both sides of the rugs and rug pads. Before replacing them, spray both floor and pad lightly with methoxychlor or malathion. Rugs and carpet surfaces, especially around the edges and under heavy furniture, also should be sprayed. These surfaces may need retreatment at 12- to 18-month intervals. The spray treatment just described is helpful in preventing damage to new rugs and carpets of natural animal fibers prior to installation.

Other household furnishings containing wool and/or mohair such as draperies, upholstered furniture, cushions, felt backings, etc. may be sprayed with a methoxychlor solution to prevent or eliminate clothes moth or carpet beetle damage. Piano felt pads are best treated by a piano technician to avoid chemical damage potential and damage to other parts of the piano. Upholstered furniture and pillows may require fumigation by a professional pest control operator because surface sprays will not control fabric pests inside the stuffing.

Household surface treatment. Spraying surfaces on which insects crawl or hide is one of the most effective means of killing fabric pests. Applications of methoxychlor, malathion, ronnel or diazinon are effective against both of these insects. Surface treatments should be made as coarse sprays to surfaces where infestations are present. Spray along the edges of wall-to-wall carpeting in closets, corners, cracks, baseboards, moldings and other secluded areas. These treatments are particularly important for carpet beetle control, since they commonly live in lint and debris in these areas.

Follow all directions, particularly safety precautions, on the insecticide package label. Insecticide label clearances are subject to change and changes may have occurred since this publication was printed. The pesticide USER is always responsible for the effects of pesticide residues on his own property as well as problems caused by drift from his property to other properties.

Commercial control. Most pest specialists provide dependable service for controlling clothes moths and carpet beetles.

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