



## Death to moths!

Very sorry about this but our need is greater than theirs ...

### General

- The case-bearing moth, or clothes moth loves and eats the protein in wool, mohair, alpaca (especially unprocessed alpaca) and silk, which is called keratin
- Moths like dark, dusty places and shun light but keeping textiles in bright sunlight will bleach and rot them gradually too!
- Once moths are with you, they are very difficult to get rid of without resorting to quite extreme measures, so it's best if possible not to permit them to reach you ...
- Moths do not fly very high, only perhaps 1.5 metres from the floor, so storage of things higher up can be useful
- As with most insects, the moth life cycle starts with laying eggs, and it is the larvae which eat the keratin while growing up into the next generation of moths
- Killing the moths is easier than killing eggs and larvae, though once you see a moth it may be a bit late to save things!

### Precautions

- Moths prefer dirty clothes to clean ones – as wool tends to need washing less frequently, it is still always worth checking after each wearing whether laundry is needed – often a good shake and hanging up to air will refresh things enough to store until the next time
- Keep precious clothes clean in plastic coverings or storage bags
- Keep rotating and airing hanging clothes, brush and shake after each wearing
- Tightly packed things, or vacuum packed things are much more difficult for moths to attack – generally a cone of knitting yarn can be saved because only the outside will have been attacked, but if there is any sign of the little eggs, particularly in balls and skeins, then stern measures are needed
- Rotate items stored flat, shaking and hanging out for a good airing
- Vacuum into the wardrobes and drawers, into corners and under furniture regularly
- Deterrents include proprietary branded anti moth treatments, and you can also use a vinegar solution to wash down cupboards, then cedar wood and the anti-insect plant oils like neem, eucalyptus, lavender, tea-tree, or bergamot can be left in bowls with water or use bundles of rosemary, thyme, cloves, bay leaves, or pomanders (oranges stuck with cloves). Also all the small ends of soap bars and empty scent bottles can be left in your pullover drawer
- Use proprietary pheromone traps – sticky pads which can be hung where you don't want to find moths, and attract male moths. A home-made version is fly paper with fish oil on it





## Detection

- Moths flying out if disturbed or flying in early evening (they are nocturnal)
- Tiny holes in clothing, sometimes in rows
- Fine white webby hairs are a sign of the cocoons
- Tiny white balls are the eggs
- Wiggly small white larvae
- Musty smell in cupboards
- Moths caught on pheromone traps or fly paper

## Treatment

- The first thing to do is establish the scale of the problem: moths in carpets and furnishings are the worst and might even need replacing everything! If you have moths in carpets and furnishings, call in an expert exterminator at once!
- Once you know where the moths are, empty and clean the area well, both wiping down with vinegar solution and vacuuming
- Go through all items to see what is rescuable with repairs and what must be ditched, brush clothing down to remove the worst – most attacks will be on the surface
- If you see larvae, they can be killed with neem-based treatments and some people find that putting things into the freezer for a couple of weeks will also help – it is doubtful however whether even freezing will kill eggs so it is best to wash if in any doubt
- Wash all items to get rid of eggs – including non wools and silks if everything was mixed up as the eggs may have been spread around and both moths and larvae can crawl a useful (to them!) distance
- If any items will stand it after washing, a hot tumble dry will help, or else a couple of weeks in the freezer
- Don't pass the problem on – so either burn or bury seriously damaged items, or if re-cycling ensure they are washed first!

## So it's best to avoid and prevent if you can!

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