Resource:

Collections – Pest Information Sheet

Spiders
Various (Arachnids: Araneomorphae)

Size
From 5-120mm

Favourite Food
Live prey such as flies, moths, woodlice, other spiders

What to look for
Spiders hatch from eggs as spiderlings – like tiny adults – which grow and mature.

You may see the actual spiders or their dead prey or (or their shed skins), more commonly, you may notice strands of cobweb near the ceiling or in undisturbed areas.

There are more than 650 species of spiders in the UK, but there are only a few (at least 8 species often occur in association with buildings),   which you will find in the museum.

Common features:
- They have 8 legs and multiple eyes.
- The body is in two parts (head and thorax are one part with the 4 pairs of legs, abdomen is a rounded blob at the back).
- There are no antennae but you may see large pedipalps and jaws at either side of the mouth.

What should we do?
- Remove dead insects such as flies promptly.
- Block entrances to prevent pests and spiders entering.
- Remove cobwebs gently but thoroughly using synthetic dusters or brushes (not feather dusters as feather fragments can act as a food source for pests).
- If possible, trap live spiders and put them outside where they can carry on their good work.
- Horse chestnuts do not seem to discourage spiders.

Top tips:
- **Want more information on spiders? Take a look at the British Arachnological Society website.**
- **If you are unsure about how to deal with any pests in your collection or store, contact a conservator (or Conservation Development Officer in the SW) for advice.**

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Spiders which are frequently noticed in museums include:

Large House Spider	(3 Eratigena spp)	• 10-16mm brown body • Long, brown, hairy legs (no stripes) • Funnel webs	
Daddy Long legs	(Pholcus phalangioides)	• 7-10mm body • Pale yellow, circular thorax with dark patch, cylindrical greyish abdomen with dark blotches • Front legs 5x length of body • Straggly web	 Daddy Long Legs 2007 - I, Alvesgaspar [CC BY-SA 3.0]
Long Legged Cellar Spider	(Psilochorus simoni)	• Body 2.5mm long • Like a very small Daddy-longlegs spider with a blueish thorax and a dark band across the abdomen • Sheet web	
Woodlouse Spider	(Dysdera crocata)	• 9-15mm body • Thorax and large jaws are shiny, dark red, abdomen is grey or pale yellow like a soft bag • No web	

Spiders also commonly found indoors:

- Money spiders
- Tube web spiders
- False widow spiders
- Spitting spiders
- Jumping spiders
- Window spiders

Resource:

Are they a problem?

They don't eat the collection and only a few species can bite human skin, so they are not a problem in the usual pest sense. However, they are very useful indicators. They show that the museum has enough other species available as food for the spiders.

Woodlouse spiders usually hunt outside the museum and come in for shelter, so finding them on traps may show that there are large gaps under doors or window frames, unprotected vents or even cracks in the masonry which need to be blocked to prevent more harmful pests entering.

Spider webs can become so large that they trigger alarms, causing a nuisance for the museum. In addition, they look unsightly and may make visitors feel the collection is not cared for.

Spiders in the Collection
Mark Pajak, Head of Digital, Bristol Culture

'I recently undertook an investigation into spiders in my flat and just outside. I found about 20 species, some always found inside, some live in window frames, and some just outside but they often came inside. I collected these and donated them to the museum where we now have a reference collection of spiders – if anyone would like spiders identified they can bring them to Bristol Museum and Art Gallery.
To preserve spiders, they should be kept in 70% alcohol with a label inside stating the date and location that they were found.'

See our associated guides to identifying and treating museum pests on our [resources page](#).

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