

## Case-bearing Clothes Moth

(*Tinea pellionella*)

### Size

Adult 8-10mm, larva up to 10mm long

### Favourite Food

Larvae eat animal protein fibres such as wool, silk, fur and feathers. May eat dead animals especially birds.

### What to look for

Larva - Dark brown head and cream coloured body, usually inside a case made from fibres, so can be camouflaged on the object.

Adult - Silvery brown moth with fringed wings, often with two or more darker spots and a fuzzy golden head. Long, thin antennae. Often walk rather than fly.

The Case-bearing Clothes Moth is only a centimetre long, with **slim, silky wings** and a tuft of **golden hairs** on its head.

**Adults:** Similar to its relative, the **Webbing Clothes Moth**, but can be distinguished by the colour which is more **greyish-brown** than golden and the presence of **two or more darker patches** on the wings.

**Larvae:** Sometimes seen **crawling up walls**, dragging their fuzzy **fibrous case** with them. The case is made using fibres chewed from the object they were feeding on, so can be camouflaged.

The adults may be attracted to a museum by the presence of **dead animals** such as mice or birds in attics or roof spaces. Having stripped it clean of fur, feathers and skin they may then **invade the rest of the building looking for more animal fibres**. They can tolerate damper areas than Webbing Clothes Moths.



*Tinea pellionella*, Trawscoed, North Wales, July 2009 [Janet Graham](#) CC BY-SA 2.0

The adults **generally appear in spring** but with increasing warmth they can have up to **four life cycles** a year and you may see them throughout the summer and autumn.

**If you spot the adults or larvae** in the museum, crawling up walls, stuck in traps or fluttering near windows, it is **vital that you take action** to find out what they have been eating and if you have a colony that is spreading.

## Top tips:

- Don't forget – other moths may also be damaging the collection. We have more details on other pests, including our [online resource pages](#).
- 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.

## Infested?

- **Check your pest traps weekly** once you have spotted moths and record how many you find in each. This can help you track the source.
- Put out **more traps** especially near entrances that insects could use – **roof hatches, vents and gaps between floorboards** may all be entry points.
- Use **flying insect traps** and **Demi-Diamond wall traps** as well. You can even buy traps with the moth pheromone if you are sure which species you have.



12.027 BF240 Case-bearing Clothes Moth, *Tinea pellionella*, larva. [Patrick Clement](#) CC BY-SA 2.0

## Actions

- Be scrupulous about **housekeeping** – empty bins daily and make sure food residues are cleaned up.
- Have **traps in all areas**, especially where people hang up coats and bags – they can bring moths in unknowingly (or carry them home!)
- **Deep clean** areas where there may be an infestation – move all boxes, vacuum floors and wipe shelves. You can use a museum-suitable **permethrin-type pesticide** like Constrain to spray in cracks in walls, floors, under skirting boards but not on objects.
- If you find infested objects, **pick off any live pests** you find, then **isolate** the objects by **wrapping** them in acid-free tissue and then in polythene sheet and **sealing** ALL the edges with parcel tape.
- Contact a conservator (or the CDO if your museum is in the South West) for treatment advice, quickly!

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

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