

# Protect your animal fabrics from carpet beetles and clothes moths

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Holes in your woolens and silks? Furs, leathers goods, and wool rugs ruined? Although many people blame clothes moths for the damage, in Idaho carpet beetles cause most holes in animal-derived fabrics. You can determine which insect caused the damage by examining the article. Clothes moths leave webs spun by the feeding larvae. Carpet beetles leave empty, fuzzy skin castings. Most carpet beetles and clothes moths do not feed on artificial fibers (for example, polyester) or plant fibers (for example, cotton and linen) unless food has been spilled on them.

## Carpet beetles

Besides feeding on animal fabrics and hides, carpet beetles feed upon animal feed and cereal products high in protein. Other food sources include old wasp and bee nests, dead flies, museum specimens, fly tying materials, mounted hunting and fishing trophies, and dead mice and birds.

Carpet beetles can fly into your home, or you may bring them in on a contaminated article or in pet food. The adults often feed outside on pollen and in warm weather, they can easily fly from house to house. Because the adults are active fliers and are attracted to daylight, you may see these small, dark beetles around windows. You may also find them in the bathtub. These sightings may be the first indications that you have an infestation.

Of all the species of carpet beetles that live in the United States, only five are normally found in Idaho homes — the black carpet beetle, the furniture carpet beetle, the common carpet bee-

tle, the varied carpet beetle, and the larger beetle. All carpet beetles have similar life histories consisting of four life stages — egg, larva, pupa, and adult. Only the larval stage damages fabrics.

A female can lay up to 400 eggs on or near food sources. Once the eggs hatch, larvae crawl to a food source and begin feeding. Larvae molt 6 to 10 times and cast their skins in or on food sources.

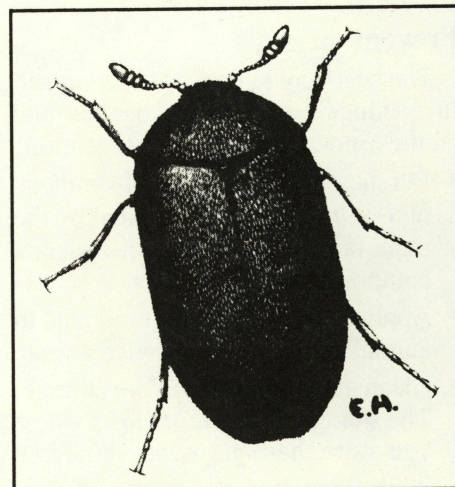
Larvae do not stay on their food material, but crawl from place to place and may be found on nonfood items such as cottons. You may find them behind baseboards and moldings, in floor cracks, in corners, behind radiators, in air ducts, on closet shelves, in dresser drawers, and behind cabinet drawers. They usually damage fibers in dark places such as dresser drawers, closets, trunks, or, in the case of carpet, under furniture with little or no traffic. Damaged foods usually have been stored for some time.

When ready to pupate, the larvae of some species wander until they find a suitable site. Some bore into wood before pupating. Larval development usually takes a year.

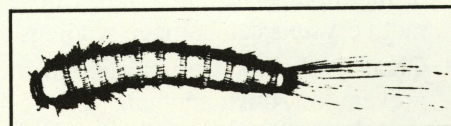
## Clothes moths

Clothes moths usually enter the home on animal fibers that are already infested. The few clothes moth infestations that occur in Idaho can usually be traced to materials brought into the state from other areas.

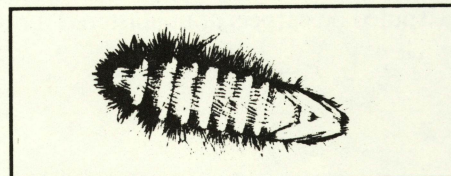
Adults of the two species of clothes moths resemble each other. Both are buff or light tan with wing spans of



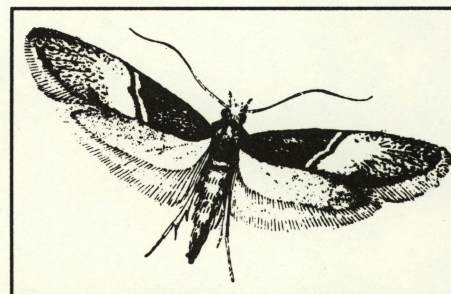
Black carpet beetle adult



Black carpet beetle larva



Varied carpet beetle larva



Adult clothes moth



approximately 1/2 inch. Adults prefer darkness and favor closets or dark corners near animal fabrics. Fully grown larvae are about 1/2 inch long. Depending upon which species is involved, damage by the larvae is associated with webbing or with a horn-shaped tent containing a small larva.

## What to do

### Prevention

The best way to protect clothing and furnishings from carpet beetles and clothes moths is through prevention:

- Purchase woolens or wool-synthetic blends that have been treated by the manufacturer with a moth-resistant compound.
- Apply a moth proofing compound to animal fabrics once or twice a year.
- Clean animal fabrics before storage. The storage, cabinet, or closet where you store these garments should be tight.
- If you have had a problem in the past, store woolens with packets of moth crystals (paradichlorobenzene) or moth balls (naphthalene). Loose moth crystals can damage woolens.
- Clean your home often enough to prevent lint, dust, and hair from accumulating. Be especially thorough wherever human or pet food has spilled on carpets or upholstered fur-

niture. Closets, particularly those in which woolens or furs are kept, and other hard-to-reach surfaces need attention.

- Expose and clean rugs under heavy furniture or cabinets.
- Dispose of old, unused fabrics made from animal-derived yarns. They are the most likely source of infestation.
- When needed, spray insecticides on drawers, cabinets, and other surfaces where these insects are likely to crawl.
- Hire a pest-control firm to treat your house if you are unable to handle the problem yourself.
- Reinfestation is always a possibility after treatment; check often for signs of the insects.
- Destroy all deserted bird nests on or close to the house in the fall.
- Check all secondhand furniture, other furnishings, and clothing for infestations before bringing them into your home.

### Treatment

Eggs and larvae can be eliminated from clothing, rugs, and upholstered furniture by brushing, vacuuming, sunning, washing, or dry cleaning the fabric.

**Chemical treatment** — *Do not treat furs*; have a professional treat them.

Before you treat woolens, silks, or leathers, clean and brush all dust, lint, and foreign material from the fabric. If the fabric is heavily soiled, have it cleaned. Then use one of the chemicals listed below according to the manufacturer's label. Treat all of the fabric. Make applications in fresh air or with proper ventilation. Allow the fabric to dry before placing it into storage.

Check the items every few months to make sure you have killed the insects and that no new infestations have occurred. Air the fabric before using it. Items giving off pesticide odors should be dry cleaned before you use them.

Clothes moths can be treated with a pesticide containing one or more of the following ingredients: allethrin, pyrethrin, and resmethrin.

Carpet beetles can be treated with all of the pesticides listed for clothes moths and with pesticides containing one or more of the following ingredients: chlorpyrifos, fenvalerate, propoxur, diazinon, and DDVP.

**Be sure both the site and the pest are on the insecticide label.**

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