

CLOTHES MOTH

Lepidoptera: Tineidae

By Eric Day

SIZE: Less than 1 inch.

COLOR: Yellowish to gold-colored.

DESCRIPTION: Clothes moths are small, yellowish to slightly gold-colored moths with narrow, slightly pointed wings. They are not attracted to lights and usually hide when disturbed.

HABITAT: In houses where wool is available; also, in the wild.

LIFE CYCLE: Female webbing clothes moths lay 40-50 eggs that hatch in 4 to 21 days. Larvae like to feed on soiled material, spinning silken mats or tunnels and incorporating textile fragments and bits of feces into the construction. The life cycle is about 65 to 90 days.



Larva, pupa, and adult Clothes moth on wool.
Clemson University - USDA Cooperative
Extension Slide Series. Bugwood.org.

TYPE OF DAMAGE: Clothes moths can feed on wool products, such as clothing, carpets, rugs, furs, fabrics, blankets, and piano felts. They may feed on fabrics of vegetable origin (cotton) if the fabrics are mixed with wool or soiled with food particles. Clothes moths can do serious damage to small or large wool rugs. The caterpillars can feed on the underside of the rug for a long time-doing considerable damage-before they are detected.

CONTROL: Articles must be protected from clothes moth attack, either by frequent cleaning or storing in insect-free environments. Wool rugs should be inspected and cleaned (if small enough) on a regular basis.

INTERESTING FACTS: Most damage is done to clothing and fiber left undisturbed for a long time or to clothing soiled with beverages, urine, oil, and sweat.