

Pest Fact sheet No 4

Webbing clothes moth

Name Common or webbing clothes moth

Latin name *Tineola bisselliella*

Size Adult 8mm-10mm long

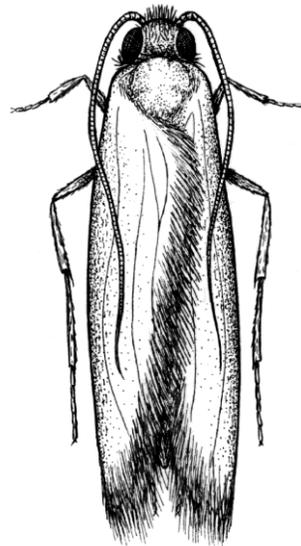


Larvae 0.5 mm – 10 mm long



Identification features

Adult



Small moths covered with shiny whitish-gold scales.
Head with a brush of orange hairs and long thin antennae.

Larva



White with an orange-brown head capsule. Often hidden by tubes of silk webbing.

Life cycle

Adult moths fly well when it is warm and females lay batches of eggs on wool, fur, feathers and other organic materials. When the larvae first hatch they are extremely small, less than 0.5 mm, and they remain in the material where they have hatched. As they feed and grow, they secrete silk webbing which sticks to the material they are living on. As they get larger, the silk forms tubes around them. They prefer dark undisturbed places and are rarely seen unless disturbed.

In unheated buildings, the larvae may take nearly a year to complete their growth and each new cycle starts after they pupate and change into adults in the Spring. In heated buildings they may complete two complete cycles per year with another emergence of adult moths in the Autumn. In very warm buildings there may even be three generations per year with moths appearing at any time.

Signs of damage

Irregular holes, silk webbing and gritty pellets of excreta, called frass, are signs of moth attack.



Silk webbing on wool carpet



Silk webbing stuck
to canvas fabric



Materials damaged

The larvae are voracious feeders and will graze on and make holes in woollen textiles, animal specimens, fur and feathers.

They will also attack silk textiles, particularly if these are stained with sweat. Clean cotton materials are not normally attacked, although larvae may bore through this on their way out of upholstery.

Finding the source

Moths may be very visible flying around, but the larvae will be hidden away in dark and hidden places in folds and crevices. They particularly like layers of wool textiles and undisturbed places under furniture and at the edges of carpets.

They are also found in natural situations such as birds' nests and animal carcasses. Check unused chimney flues to see if they are blocked by old bird nests or bodies.

Similar species

Case-bearing clothes moth *Tinea pellionella*. [See pest fact sheet number 5]

White-shouldered house moth *Endrosis sarcitrella*