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Brown House Moth

Hofmannophila pseudospretella



GENERAL INFORMATION

The Brown House Moth is often grouped with other “secondary” clothes moths behind the webbing clothes moth *Tineola bisselliella* and casemaking clothes moth *Tinea pellionella* in economic importance. If you are experiencing this pest first hand, you will consider it anything but secondary. It can feed on an extremely wide variety of items, causing considerable damage to many common items found in a museum collection. Infestations can begin outdoors in forests and mulch areas and eventually find their way into a house or museum. Most activity by the adults is seen during the summer and fall months in the northern hemisphere. The moth has been documented in the United States, Europe, India, Australia, and New Zealand.

SIGNS OF INFESTATION

The larvae do all of the damage through feeding. The infestation can be somewhat camouflaged as the larva will spin its cocoon right into the food material it is feeding on. The damage is not distinct and appears in an irregular manner in the food product.

FOOD SOURCES

The larvae of the Brown House Moth feed on a very wide variety of materials. These include: clothing, cereals, cereal products, grains, book bindings, bird nests, dry organic debris, upholstery, carpets, furs, skins, dried specimens of birds and animals, dried plants, chairs stuffed with horsehair, paper, corks in wine bottles and both live and dead chrysalides of butterflies and moths.

LIFE CYCLE



DIAGNOSTIC MORPHOLOGY

Adults:

- Dark brown forewings across which several rows of dark brown spots are present
- Hind wings are fringed with long hairs
- 8 – 15 mm in length ($\frac{1}{3}$ – $\frac{7}{12}$ in.)



Immature Stage:

- Larva is white with a tan head
- Cocoon will be woven into the food material
- 19 mm ($\frac{3}{4}$ in.) long

The life cycle of this pest can vary quite drastically depending on the environment. Egg incubation can be anywhere from 8.5 to 110 days. The larval stage can last from 71 to 145 days. Field studies show that the complete life cycle lasting 12 months.

CONTROL & TREATMENT

Standard control and treatment methods for museum pests will generally control this pest. There are sex pheromone lures available for this pest for monitoring purposes.

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Fact Sheet: Brown House Moth

Mallis, Arnold. Handbook of pest control : the behavior, life history, and control of household pests by Arnold Mallis. 9 ed. Cleveland, OH: GIE Media Inc.; 2004. 1397 p. Photo credit for adult moth, side view: Copyright, Donald Hobern, EOL.org Photo credit for adult moth top view: Image Copyright © Malcolm Storey, 2003, www.bioimages.org.uk. Some rights reserved.