

General information

None of the weaversbazaar yarns is subjected to mothproofing treatments at any stage in their production. In the UK this is now the norm since more stringent regulations were put in place in the 1990's. Initially, it was found that the effluent from factories engaging in mothproofing treatments was contaminating waterways and killing off insect life. Much stricter regulations were put in place on the quality of effluent and a large number of the chemical agents previously used were withdrawn. Together these two significant pieces of legislation brought the practice of mothproofing to an end in the UK for yarn manufacture and thereby made a large and positive contribution to the safeguarding of the environment. For those that handle yarn in the UK, chemical treatments have been replaced with moth traps, scent deterrents and physical barriers such as bags, which, when managed properly, are very effective. At weaversbazaar, we use all three approaches.

How to protect against moths



Here are some suggestions of not only how to protect your wool yarns and woven tapestries against moth damage, but what to do if you find evidence of moth activity.

Which moths cause the problem?

There are several moths that will attach fibres, not just wool and not just from natural sources. The most common clothes moth is *Tineola bisselliella* (see left). However, *Tinea pellionella*, the case bearing moth, is another voracious consumer of fibres. Typically, the life cycle of these moths starts with the laying of eggs which are covered in a sticky substance enabling them to adhere to whatever surface they are on. Between 4 to 10 days later the eggs hatch into miniscule white caterpillars which immediately start to consume whatever they are on. The caterpillars increase in size, shedding their skins as they grow, over a period of one month to two years, until they finally spin a cocoon within which, within 10-50 days



Figure 1 *Tineola bisselliella* (Common Clothes Moth) Copyright CC

they transform into the adult moth which lives for between 15 – 30 days during which they mate and lay their eggs. The adult moths do not eat so it is the caterpillars that are doing all the damage. Temperature and humidity will impact on the length of the moth's life cycle but generally it takes place over 4 – 6 months. Temperatures of around 75 °F (24 °C) will drive a shorter life cycle of about one-month temperature whilst at 10 °C (50 °F) the life cycle may extend over a couple of years.

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How should wool be stored in order to protect it?

If you are storing small tubes/balls of yarn keep them in an airtight plastic container. For larger amounts wrap in air tight bags and seal. If you have lots of large cones, wrap each one in an air tight bag. Keep the temperature down in the yarn storage area using a heavy scent that moths don't like also helps. weaversbazaar uses lemongrass which can be bought in pouches for this purpose. It acts as a deterrent to the insects entering the area where you store the yarn. Finally have some moth traps in the area you store the yarn – this doesn't really work as a deterrent, but it is a good alert if a problem is starting to develop. Moths like warmth, darkness and not being disturbed so regular handling of your yarn (also a good opportunity to inspect it) helps too.

How to treat wool if moth damage is discovered?

If you see any signs of moths on your yarn then isolate the affected yarn, remove and destroy any moth casings and then wrap the yarn in plastic, seal and put in the freezer for at least a month. This will kill any remaining moth eggs.

If your yarn is not moth proofed what is to prevent the insects attacking the woven tapestry?



*Case-bearing carpet moth larvae on fabric.
Photograph: Alamy*

For woven tapestry it is a matter of regular inspections, light cleaning with a gentle vacuum and ensuring you are doing what you can to prevent moths in the general vicinity including scent and traps if you can live with these. Our personal experience is that the unwoven yarn seems to more vulnerable than the woven and the front of the tapestry is less vulnerable than the back. It may help if you line the back of your completed tapestries and then there are no dark undisturbed recesses for the moth to

settle into. If you should find a moth problem on a woven tapestry, then remove the moth casings and eggs, gently roll it up (not too tight) with the front facing inwards, put it in a sealed plastic bag and put in the freezer for a month.

Vigilance is your friend with moths and if any issues are dealt with swiftly it need not become a problem. You can read more information about the Common Clothes Moth in this Wikipedia article: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tineola_bisselliella and about the Case-bearing Moth in the article from The Guardian Newspaper:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jan/24/pests-moths-carpets>