



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2016

MOTHS: THE NEW FLUTTERING NORMAL

The battle continues, **two full years** after I found that moths had infested a storage locker, destroyed treasured antique rugs and then somehow hitchhiked into the apartment.

Summary: Beaten back, but not extinguished.

Fighting requires a two-pronged assault: killing (in any cycle of the moth's development), and deterrence for those who elude efforts.

To **kill** eggs, larvae and adults, here's what I do:

1. Place moth traps in closets and rooms. The traps kill only breeding males but it's been sobering to see how many hit the trap in places we have never seen a moth. I've been using Aeroxon with food results and just ordered another brand from eBay seller Kritterkill, who claim to have a superior product. In a 1,200 square foot condo, I use 8 traps and change them every three months.
2. Use hanging moth cakes, such as Enoz in closed closets and the storage locker.
3. Promptly clean clothing by drycleaning or washing in 60C/120F water. (I rarely hot-wash because it's unsuitable for fine wool.)

Freezing works too, if your freezer is at least -8C/18F. (Chest deep-freezers are colder than fridge freezers.) Advice varies about how long to leave them in, between 12 hours and a week! But when worn, if any eggs are incubating in your house—eggs can live dormant for over two years—items are vulnerable to re-infestation.

4. Regularly vacuum shelves, baseboards, carpets, and furniture. (Change the vacuum bag outdoors.)

5. Squish anything we see; this is not the time to go all PETA. Moths like dim places but we've also found them hanging out on a wall in full light.

To **deter** moths from attacking clothing, I:

1. Store woolens in snap-lid boxes and breathable garment bags; we secure the hanger hole by covering with tissue paper and duct tape. For things that hang in closets because we're wearing them often, I shake out and switch up the arrangement. Moths love undisturbed nooks.
2. Place cotton balls saturated with essential lavender oil in dresser drawers and renew monthly.
3. Regularly launder, brush (outdoors), and sun garments; especially those not worn often.

What I have **not done**:

1. Moved built-in furniture such as closet systems to clean behind. Just too hard.
2. Used hardware-store insecticides that contain PDCB or naphthalene, or called exterminators: worried about toxicity.
3. Tried methods that are commonly touted but have not yielded scientific evidence of effectiveness (cedar blocks, citrus fragrance).

My research turned up an exhaustive list of what incubating clothes moths will eat besides your woolens: dust, hair (including that from pets), lint, down, fur. They munched my cotton damask napkins! They'll eat synthetics if blended with wool.

Where do they come from? No one orders clothes moths or carpet beetles from J. Crew! But think about it: the boutique owners I've talked to who specialize in fine woolens admit they, too fight moths year round, and invisible eggs can easily travel.

Here's a casemaking clothes moth near its eggs, so you can see how hard they are to spot, and eggs are usually hidden within folds or inside garments.



Moths can “ride in” even on things they don’t normally like, such as a shopping bag. And they don’t just come from flea markets; that cute tufted pillow you bought at the department store may harbour eggs.

I’m beginning to think of the moth problem as herpes for households: once you’ve got it, you can control it and that’s all. For an excellent, comprehensive guide to control, read this article by Washington Toxics Coalition.

The most radical approach is **Moth Acceptance**. That’s right: Holes? No problem. That’s the tack taken by some local hipsters who buy moth-munched vintage cashmere and wear it as is. Could this be the new bra strap? The owner of a vintage store just shrugged when I pointed out holes and said no one cares.

But I don’t want Swiss cheese cashmere. Our fine-fabric menders are on first-name terms with LeDuc, who has sustained more damage thanks to his more casual cleaning and storage habits.

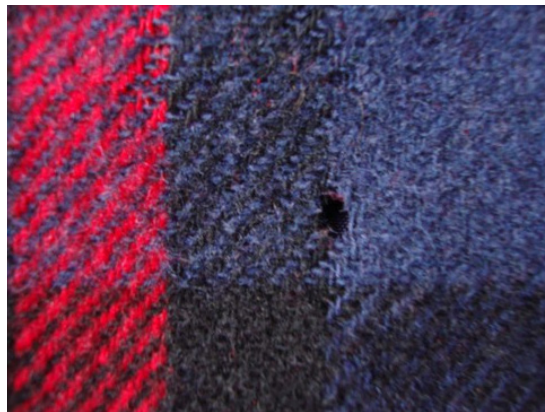
Several mending services who accept items by mail:

Cheeseworth Invisible Mending (Toronto, Ontario)

[RAVE FabriCARE](#) (Phoenix, Arizona)

British Invisible Mending Service (London, England)

French American Reweaving (New York City)



Handy with a needle? You can also find YouTube tutorials for mending holes in knits, but true or even close to ‘invisible’ level reweaving is an art.

The photo above is from The Vintage Traveller, a terrific blog written by the talented sewer and vintage collector Lizzie Bramlett; in this post she discusses reweaving a hole in her heavy Pendleton wool, and notes that restoration of fine knits is for experts.

And so it goes, a continual, frustrating skirmish shared by many of my friends and neighbours. (Once you admit you have moths, others open up.) At least they’re not bedbugs, and I have lost only one sweater so far. But in the last two days I killed two flyers, so it ain’t over.

Posted by **Duchesse** at 7:00 AM