



Care of Collections After Treatment

After treatment, care must be taken when dealing with your object to prevent further damage. Insect pest damage is **not reversible**, and once it has occurred in an object, the damage is permanent.

Integrated Pest Management applies a **risk-based approach** to determine the level of risk posed as an ethical method to reduce damage to collections from pest attack and the harmful effects of excessive chemical treatments. Current treatment methods, such as low temperature, high temperature and anoxia (low oxygen), remove the risk of these deleterious chemical treatment methods but do not protect objects from future attack. See Factsheet AC7 *Integrated Pest Management: Object Treatment Options* and AC2 *Integrated Pest Management and the risk assessment process*.

As current insect pest treatment methods **do not provide residual**, or **long-term protection** consideration must be given to:

- the environment where the object will be kept
- the condition of the object
- how the object is used, handled and displayed

Immediate action to be taken after treatment

After treatment any **evidence of previous infestation** should be **removed**, allowing for new infestations to be clearly identified. Textiles should be vacuumed to remove webbing, frass, eggs and dead larvae and adults from surfaces. Dust on the surface of wooden objects can be cleaned by gentle brushing and vacuuming to remove dead insects. An assessment of the condition of the object will be necessary to identify areas of weakness.

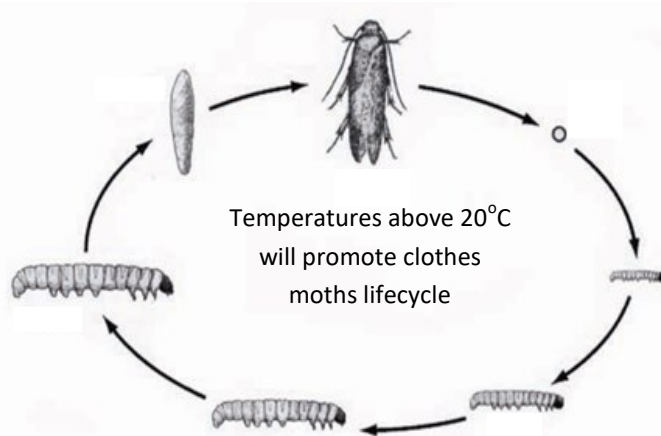
Environment

To prevent reinfestation, appropriate measures need to be taken, such as ensuring objects are **returned** to a **pest-free environment** or an environment that **does not support an insect outbreak**. Treated objects should be stored separately from actively infested materials. Storage conditions must be as unattractive for pests as possible.

Warm temperatures will encourage insect activity. The reproduction rates of many insects are determined by temperature. Temperatures of above 20°C, will result in up to three generations of clothes moths in one year. Maintaining cooler temperatures will discourage insect activity. This should be balanced with the needs of humans sharing the same environment.



Tinea cocoons and Anthrenus on feathers © DBP Entomology, 2025



Temperatures above 20°C
will promote clothes
moths lifecycle



In the UK woodboring pests are moisture reliant. Furniture beetle, *Anobium punctatum* require a moisture level of more than 55% relative humidity to survive. In centrally heated homes infestations of furniture beetle, *Anobium punctatum* will gradually die out.

Insects are secretive, and hide in dark, undisturbed areas and will live in the nutrients in dirt and dust. Implementing a systematic and robust **housekeeping programme** will discourage insect activity.

Implementing a **monitoring programme** will identify potential issues before they become a problem. Monitoring in combination with environmental management and maintaining good standards of housekeeping will ensure objects are not put at risk of reinfestation. See Factsheet AC5 *Integrated Pest Management: Monitoring and Trapping for Insects*.

Object condition and usage

Insect damage to wooden objects, such as furniture and frames will not be immediately obvious, and care should be taken when handling and moving them. Woodborer infestation can **compromise the integrity** of wooden objects. As they bore tunnels into the underlying wooden structure, the wood is left brittle and weakened. Frass will continue to be dislodged and fall out of the tunnels of previously infested wood when it is moved, so regular cleaning may be necessary.

Care should be taken when returning items such as picture frames, tables and chairs to their intended usage. If undue pressure is applied, parts may snap off, fracture, splinter or break off. Objects already damaged and weakened may need to be assessed and conserved by a professional.



Damage to wooden gilded table.
© Amy Crossman. 2025.

Practical measures to reduce the risk of future insect pest attack

- Keep conditions cool to discourage insect pest activity. Conditions between 15- 18°C will discourage insect pest activity.
- Keep the relative humidity below 55% to discourage woodborer infestations.
- Ensure a robust and systematic cleaning programme is in place.
- All objects should be condition assessed after treatment. The condition should be reviewed at regular intervals, and changes in condition recorded.
- If a new outbreak is suspected in wooden objects, placing the object on a white sheet will help identify any new woodborer activity.
- Handling should be carried out after assessing the object for weak points and only when necessary.

Further information

Crossman, A. and Pinniger, D. 2023. Integrated Pest Management and the Risk Assessment Process (AC2). London: AC/DP CoLab.

Crossman, A. and Pinniger, D. 2023. Integrated Pest Management: Monitoring and trapping for Insects (AC5). London: AC/DP CoLab.

Crossman, A. and Pinniger, D. 2023. Integrated Pest Management: Object Treatment Options (AC7). London: AC/DP CoLab.

Pinniger, D. and Crossman, A. 2023. Integrated Pest Management: A Holistic Approach to Managing Pest Damage to Cultural Assets (AC1). London: AC/DP CoLab.

