



What's Eating Your Collection?

Getting started with Integrated Pest Management

Monitoring for insect pests provides early warning of an infestation so that action can be taken before collections are damaged. Monitoring can just be carried out using insect traps, but is most effective if it is tackled through a fourfold approach. This covers monitoring using traps, checking objects vulnerable to insect infestation, housekeeping and environmental monitoring. This multi-faceted approach is often called Integrated Pest Management or IPM.

Detailed information about IPM can be found in “Pest Management, a Practical Guide” David Pinniger 2009, Collections Trust and “Pest Management in Museums, Archives and Historic Houses” David Pinniger 2001, Archetype. The information provided here is a very brief guide to IPM.

Monitoring provides information about the insects present in a space. Sticky blunder traps are used to catch the insects. This enables one to find out what insects are present and where they are in a building. See the sheet “How to place traps” for information on the placement of traps. It is important to record the insects found with the date of the find. Correct identification is the key to knowing if the insect is friend or foe. This CD can help with identification. Traps should be checked at least quarterly.

Checking objects vulnerable to insect attack gives reassurance that objects are not infested or reveals an infestation at an early stage. An annual check would be the ideal, but this may not be achievable if the collection is large or staff numbers are small. Checking objects can therefore be combined with housekeeping (most useful for displayed objects) or as a response to pest insects found on traps.

Housekeeping is a very important tool in insect pest management. It removes dust, dirt and debris which are a primary food source for insects. Regular (ideally weekly) cleaning of object spaces will remove the majority of the dust in collection spaces. A deep or winter cleaning programme should run alongside the regular cleaning. This type of cleaning allows objects and hard to reach parts of the space (such as ceilings, under shelving or floor grills etc) to be cleaned. It is important that the edges of rooms are cleaned with the crevice tool periodically to remove more ingrained dirt.

Note that for cleaning to be effective against insect pests, it should be undertaken with a vacuum and not a mop. Vacuuming removes the dust and dirt and any insects that might be present; mopping may merely move the dust and insects into cracks and this may allow an infestation to flourish. If vacuuming occurs in an area where insect pests are present the bag must be removed once cleaning is finished and the vacuum should be cleaned out to prevent the spread of the infestation.

Environmental monitoring should run alongside an insect monitoring programme. Many insects require specific environmental conditions to thrive. By monitoring the environment, information will be available to show whether the conditions are favourable for insects or not. See the fact sheets for the individual insects to find out what conditions they need. Continuous monitoring is the most helpful as this shows how the conditions change over time and what the conditions are during the closed periods. Spot readings are less helpful, but will provide a useful indication of the prevailing conditions.

See [Further advice: Evidence](#) for more information.