🐛 What's Eating Your Collection?

How to quarantine objects

If an object is suspected of being infested by insects, the object in question should be put into quarantine to prevent the infestation from spreading.

Quarantine prevents the insects from spreading and infesting anything else, but it also allows you to monitor an object to determine if it is infested or not without allowing insects to escape. Objects are often quarantined prior to treatment.

The material used for quarantine needs to prevent insects from escaping, and so it should have little or no permeability. Polythene is usually used as it is easily available and relatively cheap. Colourless polythene allows one to see inside to monitor the progress of the infestation. The polythene should be wrapped around the object and sealed with tape to make an air tight seal. Make certain that the tape does not come into contact with the object. It should only stick to polythene. If the object has sharp points or is not robust enough to be wrapped directly in polythene then place it in a box or pad the sharp or rough parts before wrapping. This method gives the added advantage that objects are ready for freezing.

Large objects are difficult to wrap and new acquisitions that require monitoring for insects may arrive in large quantities, making wrapping time consuming and costly. In these instances a quarantine area/room is a sensible option. A dedicated room should be separated from other collection areas if possible and ideally should have a vestibule so that is has an air-lock. A temporary quarantine area can be made in a store from timber covered in heavy gauge polythene. An air-lock type entry should be created to try to contain the insects. In both types of quarantine space, blunder traps should be used to monitor the escapees.

It is important to wrap objects with live infestations in the place where they are found. There are a number of horror stories told of objects taken from attics to ground floor areas to be wrapped that release moths or woolly bears for the duration of the journey, thus infesting the whole building.