



What's Eating Your Collection?

How to find the source of the infestation

Most insect infestations have a source. This may be a single object that was brought into the collection with an infestation or it may be a dead bird in a chimney. If the primary source can be found and removed, the infestation will often be eliminated or at least substantially reduced. Tracking down the source can be difficult, the following suggestions may help.

- Check the trap data. If the infesting insects are found in greater numbers on some traps rather than others this suggests that the source is in that area. Increase the number of traps to help to pinpoint the source.
- Plot the trap data on a floor plan with coloured dots for the insects found. This can show that insects are present in the same area of the building on each floor. If that proves to be the case, look for ducting etc that links the floors.
- Pay particular attention to traps placed in fireplaces. High numbers of insects indicate that the chimney should be checked. Sweeping the chimney may resolve the problem.
- Check objects in the hotspot area, especially if they are new to the collection. Wrapping suspect objects will stop the insects spreading and give you time to confirm that you have found the source. See [*How to quarantine an object.*](#)
- Look for possible dead spaces. These may be floor ducts, inaccessible gaps behind display panels, under floor spaces or underneath heavy furniture standing on carpet. If all other possible spaces have been investigated, then it is quite probable that these types of space harbour the source.
- Check the outside of the building for vegetation that may harbour birds or animals. Their detritus or dead bodies may be the source.
- Check the edges of the room, around furniture and fixtures with a torch. Check underneath rugs and carpet edges, especially in areas that are not part of the normal cleaning rota such as underneath the carpet on stairs.

If none of the above trace the source, increase the frequency of housekeeping and continue monitoring, checking the traps on a more regular basis. An insecticide treatment may be appropriate to reduce or eliminate the infestation. Note that a source cannot always be found. See [*How to quarantine an object-How to monitor an object that might be infested-Further advice: treatment options for further advice.*](#)

Also try contacting your MDO, Curatorial Adviser or Jane Thompson Webb [Jane Thompson-](#)

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