

# Woolen Care Just Takes a Little Knowledge

After you have invested a great deal of time, heart and effort in creating a hand knit sweater, you want to be sure it lives a long and happy life. We offer you the following tips so you can be on the lookout for pests and ensure that your sweaters look their best year after year.

## INSECT ENEMIES:

Clothes moths and carpet beetles are unwelcome guests in a closet full of wool garments. These two insects can and will damage wool. Avoid moth and beetle woes by ensuring that sweater storage conditions protect against them.

### **Clothes Moth Vital Stats**

*Who they are:* Golden-beige colored moths about half an inch long. Some may have dark specks on their wings.



*What they do:* Seek out quiet, dark areas where wool is stored. Female moths will lay eggs that hatch into larvae. It is these half inch long, white larvae that leave a residue on the wool that "eats" holes in the fabric or yarn.



*How to spot them:* Look for adult moths flying around the vicinity of the garments. While the adults do not damage the wool, their offspring do. When garments are taken out of storage, examine them for larvae and caterpillar evidence.

### **Carpet Beetle Profile**

*Who they are:* Oval shaped beetle, up to ¼" long, varying in color from gray to brown.



*What they do:* Locate food, especially animal by-products, and multiply near the food source. Like clothes moths, the larvae are particularly damaging, but adult beetles also destroy the wool.



*How to spot them:* Keep an eye out for beetles on or flying near your woolen items. Also scan garments for any trace of larvae or their discarded skin.

## HOW TO PREVENT PROBLEMS:

- Clean and air out the garment before storage, reducing the amount of food sources that may have collected on the clothing during wear.
- Pack sweaters in sealed bags or containers to prevent moths and beetles from gaining access to the stored garments.
- Employ a repellent to discourage bugs from bothering your woolens. Cedar is a powerful safeguard but must be refreshed regularly to maintain the strength of the scent. You may also try chemical treatments or, for a safer alternative, create your own herbal sachet to protect your yarn (*see below*).
- Shake stored sweaters out at least annually to check for signs of trouble and to replenish repellents.
- Clean storage areas and closets regularly including vacuuming the floor, shelves and walls.

## HOW TO TREAT PROBLEMS:

- Use cold to disable moths and beetles. Placing a sweater inside a sealed plastic bag in the freezer for a minimum of two days will treat moth or beetle infestation. Allow to thaw before removing sweater from bag.
- Having a garment dry cleaned will kill bugs that are damaging the fabric. Remember to remove the dry-cleaning plastic and allow the sweater to air out before storing again.

### **How to make your own herbal sachets:**

You will need a tightly woven piece of fabric at least 4" square and a combination of any of the following dried ingredients:

***Rosemary, Mint, Thyme, Ginseng, Cloves, Lavender, Cinnamon sticks, and/or Cedar chips***

These herbs may smell good to us but smell bad to bugs and encourage them to find accommodations elsewhere. Fold your piece of fabric in half and sew up two of the sides. Fill the pocket with various herbs of your choosing and add some cedar chips if you desire. Sew the opening closed. Place in the drawer or box with your sweaters for a safe way to discourage pests.

