



**Chewed up:** The caterpillar of the common clothes moth munches its way through clothes and carpets

PICTURE: SHUTTERSTOCK

# ATTACK OF THE MOTHS!

Is your favourite jumper full of holes? You're not alone, says **Amy Dawson**

**J**UST three months after moths overran the pitch (and Ronaldo's face) during the Euro 2016 final, Phillip Schofield revealed the This Morning studio had been infested with the little critters. So is this Mothmageddon?

There are 160,000 species of moths, 2,500 of which are present in the UK, and the larvae of some can devastate crops. But the species most of us are concerned with is the *Tineola bisselliella* – otherwise known as the common clothes moth.

While adult moths can't eat, the larvae (or caterpillars) of these little monsters love nothing more than to feast on natural fibres in clothes and carpets (wool and cashmere being their favourites). And their numbers appear to be on the increase – up and down the country, people have been pulling their favourite jumpers out of the wardrobe

only to find them looking more like fishing nets.

Kate Ballenger, house manager of Blenheim Palace, explains why we're all in such a pickle.

'The mild winters we've experienced of late have provided prime conditions for moths to breed,' she says. 'Once they've mated, the female moths will head for a warm environment and lay up to 40 eggs before dying. Those larvae can live for up to two years among the fabrics, slowly eating their way through whatever they can find until they develop into moths, beginning the cycle again.'

While we all know the cliché about moths and flames, these moths unfortunately prefer dark, warm habitats like your chest of drawers. And the bad news for your posh knitwear is that they're here to stay.

Want to get rid of them? Check out our tips below.



**Moth ball:** Ronaldo at Euro 2016

## TOP PEST CONTROL TIPS

### Stink them out

Lace your home with cedar oil, moth balls and conkers to keep them away and use pheromone traps to catch them.

### Cleanse them out

Keep your home as clean and dust-free as possible. The vacuum cleaner is your moth-busting friend.

### Freeze them out

Infested clothes should be washed, dry-cleaned or placed in a freezer for at least three days.

### Bag them out

Try to keep stored clothes bagged up.

### If all else fails?

It's time to call the professionals.



## CRIPES! YOU MOTH BE JOKING...

Though I was once so plagued with mice (which horrify me) that I even caught one diving into my packed Glastonbury rucksack, I thought my days with the pest control man on speed dial were, blissfully, over.

That was until I moved into a new flat with a moth plague of biblical proportions – my carpets nibbled to the nub like grotty sweetcorn husks, my jumpers turned to

spiders' webs. I vacuumed maniacally and sprayed everything with insecticide but the white pheromone traps I left in every corner of each room continued to fill faster than I could buy replacements. It was time to call in the local pest control.

Their spray left a milky residue around the place, which I wasn't allowed to clean up for two weeks, but barely a fluttery foe has been seen ever since. Moths O, Amy 1



**Menace:** The common clothes moth larvae