



City of Westminster

Pest Information

False Widow Spider



----- 15 mm -----| Female approximate comparison



False Widow Spider (*Steatoda nobilis*)

As the common name indicates, the spider superficially resembles and is frequently confused for the black widow and other spiders in the genus *Latrodectus*.

What do they look like?

They have a brown bulbous abdomen with cream coloured markings that are often likened to the shape of a skull. The female is up to 15 mm and the male up to 10 mm in length.

Where and how do they live?

They mainly set up home in buildings and in fences. For years this spider was contained within a small area around Devon but has now spread all along the southern counties and is now found in Lincolnshire and the mid lands. Its 'scaffold web' differs from others of the genus in the exceptional strength of the silk, and in the tubular retreat that is partly concealed in a deep crack or hole. They have poor eyesight and depend mostly on vibrations via their webs to orient themselves to prey or warn of threats.

Why are they a problem?

The False Widow Spider is not aggressive but is capable of biting; the symptoms of a bite are typically similar to a bee or wasp sting. There have only been a few recorded bites and the affects do not appear to be long lasting. Only the female will bite, and even then usually only if it's been attacked

Life cycle

The life cycle lasts for approximately 1-2 years, with the female living longer than the male. Mature and reproductive male spiders are found in summer and autumn, mature females can be found all year round and egg sacks are laid from spring through to autumn. They have white, spherical egg-sacs which are produced at intervals, their number depending on the food supply. Eggs hatch within 2-4 months.

How can I get rid of False Widow Spiders?

The false widow spider is afforded no conservation status. Over the counter pest control products for crawling insects should prove suitable for their eradication.

Further advice

Natural History Museum.

Wikipedia