

False Widow Spiders

There are over 640 species of spider in Britain, and only a dozen of these have been known to bite humans. Of these there are three species which are commonly mistaken for black widow spiders – hence referred to as ‘False Widows’

False Widow Spiders are now fairly common in the UK, mainly in southern England. They are of the same family (*Theridiidae*) as Black Widows, but a different genus (*Lactrodectus*).

False Widows are not the toxic foreign black widow, but a British cousin with a less dangerous bite. Being bitten by a spider is unlikely in this country in normal circumstances, and the effect of a bite is unlikely to be worse than being stung by a wasp or bee.

However, should any severe symptoms occur it is recommend that medical advice be sought and it is important to stress the fact they you have been bitten. Ideally keep the spider as evidence.

It is not necessary to report any sightings to this local authority, and there is no action currently being taken to control false widow numbers.

What do they look like?



Steatoda bipunctata

A very common spider of sheds and outbuildings. Its body, which rarely exceeds 7mm in length for mature females and 5mm for males, is dark and shiny sometimes with a pattern with a whitish line around the front and sometimes a white stripe down the centre. There are dots on the abdomen from which it gets its scientific name are not easily visible with the naked eye.

Steatoda grossa

Has a body length when mature of around 10mm for adult females and again males are generally smaller. It is variable in appearance, with only juveniles and adult males usually having a pattern and adult females often having none.



Steatoda nobilis

This is often called the "noble false widow", is the largest of the three with a maximum body length of 14mm for females and 10mm for males.

What should you do if you find any false window spiders - or any others for that matter?

Not a lot! If they are outside, it is impossible to eradicate them as there are just too many of them and, if you were to kill those in your garden others would come in to fill the niche. They are part of an eco-system and should be left alone.

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Indoors it is a different matter. They can be controlled simply by vacuuming them up, capturing them, perhaps to transfer to the garden, or if necessary, crushing them.

We do not recommend the use of insecticides, unless there are considerable numbers of spiders indoors. Check the label before purchasing and using a product. Follow the manufacturer's instructions when applying. Take care as some products can stain, or are dangerous to pets. Always use insecticides responsibly.

What should I do if I am bitten?

1. Wash the bite with soap and water.
2. Apply a cool compress/ice-pack (care not to cause a cold burn; don't leave on for more than a few minutes at a time).
3. If possible apply a bite spray such as 'Waspeze' – ask a pharmacist for advice.
4. If necessary, take over-the-counter medication to control pain or itching (e.g. antihistamine cream and suitable painkiller).
5. Antibiotics are not helpful unless the wound becomes infected;
6. Do not cut or apply suction to the wound.
7. Monitor the bite for redness, swelling, pain, or signs of infection.
8. Monitor breathing, sweating and general demeanour.
9. If redness, swelling or pain does not subside or there are signs of infection consult your doctor.

Services from Us.

The Borough Council's Pest Control Service can provide a chemical control treatment if you have a problem with a considerable number of spiders in your home. Our treatment will remain effective for about 4 weeks

- To request our help please call 01782 742590 during office hours.
- Our current charges are detailed on our website at www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk , or available by calling our Customer Services Team on 01782 742590
- Some landlords may pay this charge on your behalf if you live in rented accommodation. .

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