FOOD HABITS OF TINEOLA UTERELLA*

By J. W. Kea

The moth, Tineola uterella Walsingham, which has been present in Florida for a number of years, is apparently becoming more abundant, especially in the southern part of the state. The larva constructs about itself a bag-like covering which is gray in color, about 10 to 12 mm. in length, and with the general shape of a cantaloupe seed. These bags are quite conspicuous when on the walls of a house or other places which they frequent.

All available references state that this insect is strictly harmless, feeding only on the dried remains of insects in spider webs, etc. However, numerous complaints of householders led to a series of observations on their food habits. They refused to eat dried insects when limited solely to them in the laboratory, but upon examining the cases of specimens sent in from various places in the state very minute portions of dried insects were found, thus indicating that this is sometimes an article of their diet. Likewise, they did not eat cotton. However, when offered woolen threads and woolen cloth they ate eagerly. Numerous complaints of their depredations on rugs and other woolen fabrics have been received.

An adult female was reared by the writer in the laboratory of the Department of Entomology, Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, and sent to the U. S. Nat. Museum for identification. The adult is extremely rare and as far as the writer has been able to determine this is the only adult specimen ever taken in Florida.

Although evidence of the attack of a parasite was quite common on many larvae, only one specimen, a hymenopterous parasite, was obtained. This has not as yet been determined.

---

*Contribution from the Department of Entomology, Florida Agricultural Experiment Station.

---

Printing for All Purposes
Carefully Executed
Delivered on Time

Pepper Printing Company
Gainesville, Florida