

spongy moth

WISCONSIN COOPERATIVE
SPONGY MOTH PROGRAM

background

exotic pest

- Native to Europe and Asia, introduced to North America in 1869;
- Distributed from Maine south to Virginia, and west through Wisconsin;
- Well established in eastern and central Wisconsin and is spreading westward into Minnesota.

damage

- Caterpillars feed on the leaves of up to 500 species of trees and shrubs, favoring oak;
- May defoliate several million acres in the U.S. during the summer months;
- Defoliated trees grow a new set of leaves, but are weakened and may be killed by other pests;
- The first defoliation occurred in Wisconsin in 1999.

lifecycle

- Caterpillars emerge from late April to late May and begin feeding;
- Stop feeding and pupate, forming a cocoon in late June to mid-July;
- Adult moths emerge from pupae, mate and die in mid-July to early August;
- Eggs overwinter in a protective egg mass;
- Each female lays an average of 600 eggs in a single egg mass.

rapid spread

- Spongy moths thrive in many habitats because they are not picky eaters;
- Because they're not native to North America, they have few natural enemies here;
- Egg masses are often moved long distances and into new areas on; firewood, vehicles, tree trimmings, and other outdoor items.

Wisconsin's program goals

- The "Slow the Spread" Program aims to delay the establishment of spongy moth in the western part of the state and to eradicate isolated populations there.

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