



FACTSHEET

FALL WEBWORM / MULBERRY MOTH

Hyphantria cunea

BIOSECURITY PEST

2025



Fall webworm moth



Fall webworm larvae

Fall webworm is a moth species whose caterpillars form webbed nests on the tree limbs of many fruit, shade and woodland trees. Larvae build huge silk nests and feed on the enclosed foliage resulting in only brown skeletonised leaves, completely defoliating trees. Its wide host range and strong flying ability mean it can spread very fast.

Look out for...

- On Plant** Fall webworms are most easily identified by loose, gray, silken webs spun by caterpillars feeding on leaves at the end of the branch. Webs are most likely in autumn. Caterpillars can cause feeding tracks on fruit surface, with brown underneath skin. Also look for brown skeletonised leaves.
- Eggs** Light yellow eggs are laid in masses 50 most commonly on the underside of leaves. The egg masses are covered in white hairs from the female adult's abdomen.
- Larvae** The mature caterpillar is yellowish or tawny, with a dark stripe down the back and rows of distinctive black and orange-yellow tubercles on each side. The body is covered by long, fine, light colored hairs. 25 mm long.
- Pupae** The reddish brown pupae is about 12 mm long.
- Adult** The adult moths are satiny white with black spots on wings, and a hairy body. Most often seen at night.



Silky nests on shoot tips



Caterpillars eating leaf

Organism type: Insect

Order: Lepidoptera

Most likely to enter:

Eggs on plants, larvae/ adults on containers, logs, machinery



Containers



Plants



Logs



Vehicles



Already established:
Canada, China, Korea,
Japan, Mexico, Turkey,
USA, Europe, Asia

Risk to:
Crop ✓



FALL WEBWORM

Hyphantria cunea

How will this pest affect my orchard!

Fall webworm is a moth species whose caterpillars form webbed nests on the tree limbs including on fruit trees.

The caterpillars create a tent-like web, skeletonizing and consuming all the leaves within it. The larvae are primarily leaf feeders, but if fruit is enclosed in the webs they will feed on it. As they grow and require more food the structure is extended and enlarged, in extreme cases this can result in defoliation. However, this rarely causes tree death; small and young trees are thought to be more susceptible to serious damage. Due to its similarities, it's likely codling moth controls in orchards would help manage fall webworm.

What are the market access implications?

Multiple countries have quarantine regulations for this pest. Russia and Vietnam being countries of significance. However not usually associated with exported fruit so unlikely to be a market access risk.

Spreading Potential and Climate Suitability

North Island and the top half of the South Island (above Timaru) would be suitable for fall webworm to establish. The most favourable conditions are 70-80% RH and temperatures not exceeding 22-25°C. Pairing this with fall webworms strong flying ability (several km's) and large host range it would likely have no problem spreading throughout New Zealand.

If you think you've found this pest

If you see any tell tale silky nests:

- Photograph them
- Note the location
- Call **0800 80 99 66**

If you've found a long hairy caterpillar with black and orange spots:

- Photograph it
- Capture it
- Call **0800 80 99 66**



Silky nests full of caterpillars



Fall webworm larvae



Fall webworm adult moth



Skeletonised leaves inside silky nest