



FACTSHEET

SPONGY MOTH

Lymantria dispar



Male Spongy moth



Spongy moth Larvae

Spongy moth (formerly known as Gypsy moth) lay hundreds of eggs in a single mass. The egg masses then hatch, releasing hundreds of caterpillars. These caterpillars strip the leaves from entire trees, devastating stands of trees including fruit trees. There are three subspecies of spongy moth: European spongy moth (*Lymantria dispar dispar*), Asian spongy moth (*Lymantria dispar asiatica*), and Japanese spongy moth (*Lymantria dispar japonica*).

Look out for...

The two easiest life stages to identify are caterpillars and egg masses. Extreme defoliation and damage to leaves with large amounts of frass are symptoms of infestation.

Eggs Buff coloured egg masses laid anywhere; leaves, bark, rocks, buildings, vehicles and any outdoor structure.

Larvae Brown, grey, black and hairy. Have 6 pairs of red dots and 5 pairs of blue dots on their back at full maturity. 5-75mm.

Pupae Dark brown and cylinder shaped. 19- 44mm long. Commonly found attached to objects such as trees, buildings, rocks, and logs.

Male moth Tan / brown with irregular black wing markings, feathery antennae 37 – 50 mm.

Female moth White with darker wavy bands across the forewings. 37-62 mm wingspan.



Spongy moth egg mass



Female Spongy moth

Organism type: Insect

Order: Lepidoptera

Most likely to enter:

Egg masses on...



Logs



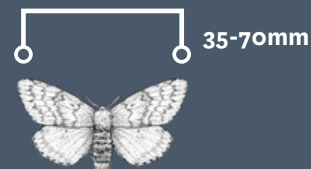
Vehicles



Containers



Parcels



Already established:
Europe, North Africa,
Asia, Canada, USA,
China, Korea, Japan

Risk to:

Crop ✓ **Market access** ✓



SPONGY MOTH

Lymantria dispar

How will this pest affect my orchard!

Spongy moths have an extremely wide host range, being able to complete their life cycle on over 650 plant species. Spongy For New Zealand, many urban tree species and horticultural crops would be affected, including apples and pears.

Very large numbers of caterpillars can inhabit a single tree and spread to surrounding trees. Hatching larvae start feeding on flushing buds and then new leaves, causing extensive defoliation, leading to reduced growth and death of the tree.

Caterpillar feeding behavior also leaves trees more susceptible to secondary infections (bacterial and fungal).

This pest is also a nuisance to humans as the hairs, shed skin and silken threads can cause allergic reactions.



Hatchling spongy moth caterpillars



Spongy moth pupae



Spongy moth larvae eating foliage



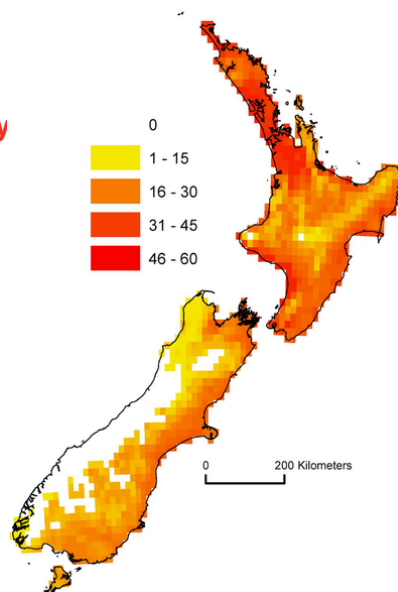
Spongy moth larvae

What are the market access implications?

Multiple countries have quarantine regulations for this pest.

Spreading Potential and Climate Suitability

Spongy moths have a large environmental tolerance range, and it is said that they are likely to occupy all portions of the temperate world where oaks and other suitable host plants exist. European spongy moth dispersal is normally limited to short distances due to females inability to fly. Asian spongy moths are more capable of spreading, as they can fly up to 1km. Long range expansion for both species is generally facilitated by movement from humans.



If you think you've found this pest

We don't have any species that lay hairy egg masses in New Zealand. If you see any:

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

If you've found a hairy caterpillar with red and blue spots:

- Photograph it
- Capture it (if you can but watch out for the stinging hairs)
- Call **0800 80 99 66**