

SPONGY MOTH

LYMANTRIA DISPAR

Hosts and Range

Spongy moth caterpillars, *Lymantria dispar* (Lepidoptera: Lymantriidae), can feed on more than 300 species of trees and shrubs, including willow, oak, cottonwood, cedar, birch, aspen and fruit trees. Spongy moth is native to Europe but has been established for over a century in the northeastern United States and has been expanding its range south and westward. In the southern region, spongy moth is established in much of Virginia and two counties in North Carolina. It has been detected in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Texas and Florida but has not become established in those states.

Identification and Symptoms

Spongy moth caterpillars are distinguishable from those of other species by the abundant hairs and the five pairs of blue spots and six pairs of red spots that run down their backs. Adult male spongy moths are brown with a wingspan of 1½ inches. Adult females are slightly larger, white in color, and unable to fly.

The unique appearance of the spongy moth egg mass is a key characteristic used to identify the species. Spongy moth caterpillars are aggressive feeders, capable of defoliating an entire tree canopy in just a few days. Repeated

defoliation can lead to tree mortality in one to two years.

Firewood

The best method of controlling the spongy moth is to prevent its introduction. Since the egg masses are small and difficult to detect, people can easily transport them unintentionally to new areas. It is recommended that

infested wood debris and firewood not be moved long distances. If traveling for recreational activities,

it is recommended that people leave firewood at home and instead buy local firewood at the destination. If departing

from a location with a spongy moth population, it is recommended that cars, trailers, boats and camping equipment be inspected for spongy moth egg masses and that the masses are removed before traveling.



**DONTMOVE
FIREWOOD.org**

What's In Your Firewood?

Firewood movement is a major pathway for the introduction of destructive invasive pests to new ecosystems. By using local or heat treated firewood, the public can prevent the accidental movement of these damaging pests.

When a reproducing spongy moth population is found, a quarantine is put into place to limit the spread of the pest through human activities. The quarantine prohibits the transport of firewood out of quarantined areas into unaffected areas.

Additional Information

<http://southernforesthealth.net/insects/spongy-moth>



Each female spongy moth lays 600-1,000 eggs in a compact, tear-dropped shaped mass of eggs and silk. The egg masses are typically laid on the trees on which the resulting caterpillars feed.



Materials excerpted with permission from "Changing Roles: WUI Professional Development Program," a publication of Urban Forestry South, USDA Forest Service: <https://urbanforestrysouth.org>

Don't Move Firewood branding and messaging courtesy of www.DontMoveFirewood.org