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PORCUPINE DAMAGED FORESTS, NELSON FOREST DISTRICT

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In many parts of Nelson Forest District porcupine feeding on western larch and lodgepole pine trees has produced top-kill, forked leaders, and in some instances tree mortality.

Porcupines gnaw the bark of immature trees girdling their stems. Fungi, such as stem decays and *Cytospora* dieback, thus gain easy access to the sapwood. The recent drier than average summer combined with the other factors has strikingly increased the degree of tree damage.

In West Kootenay, yellow-topped western larch were obvious by September in large numbers along Blueberry Creek from Nancy Greene Lake to Castlegar and along several creeks draining into the Arrow Lakes west of Castlegar, notably Cayuse Creek. In East Kootenay, vast areas of immature larch and lesser amounts of lodgepole pine along Bloom and Caven creeks were girdled by porcupines. Feeding damage has occurred in these latter areas for several years but became pronounced in 1977.