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April 1986

WESTERN TENT CATERPILLAR IN VICTORIA

by
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Forest Insect and Disease Survey

The western tent caterpillar Malacosoma c. pluviale has hatched and webs are becoming visible on deciduous trees in Victoria. Second instar larvae were collected April 10, 1986 on hawthorn near Beacon Hill Park. The egg hatch began about the first week in April and light webbing and defoliation are expected. This is the fifth year of the infestation in Victoria.

Defoliation of fruit and ornamental trees is expected in Greater Victoria and in previous years has been recorded throughout the lower Fraser Valley and southeastern Vancouver Island. Severe defoliation over a number of years may result in top-kill and increment loss; however, infested trees usually recover.

An effective way to reduce populations is the removal of egg masses, tents and larvae colonies by pruning. Colonies and tents are removed in the spring and the silvery grey egg masses encircling small twigs are clipped in the winter months. Insecticides may also be used for control. More extensive surveys for defoliation will be completed in July and will record the severity and the extent of the damage.

Infestations have been recorded in the Vancouver Forest Region since 1937, extending from White Rock to Powell River and Victoria to Campbell River. Infestations usually last four years and a polyhedrosis virus and parasites often reduce populations.

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