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PEST REPORT

Pacific Forestry Centre • 506 West Burnside Rd. • Victoria, B.C. • V8Z 1M5

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WESTERN TENT CATERPILLAR IN THE VANCOUVER REGION IN 1986, AND 1987 FORECAST

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Western tent caterpillar, Malacosoma c. pluviale defoliation expanded for the fifth consecutive year in the Vancouver Region. On Vancouver Island tent caterpillar caused light to severe defoliation of roadside deciduous trees, shrubs, fruit trees and alder in forest stands. The defoliation extended in patches from Campbell River to Victoria along the east coast of the Island and the Gulf Islands. The most severe defoliation was from Nanaimo south to Victoria and the Gulf Islands, including Galiano Island.

Light to severe defoliation of deciduous trees and shrubs was common in the Lower Mainland from Ladner to Abbotsford and north to Horseshoe Bay. Moderate defoliation of red alder was common from Gibson's Landing to Powell River including Bowen and Texada islands.

At Victoria, larvae in some locations were dying, a viral infection is suspected and samples are being analyzed. Egg sampling at this location had a ratio of 1 new to 6 old egg masses, indicating a decline in population for 1987. At Sidney Spit Provincial Park on Sidney Island the ratio is 1 new to 2 old egg masses indicating a slight decline in population. However, it is expected that potentially annoying numbers of tent caterpillar will be present in 1987, based on the number of egg masses found (2.3 new, 4.3 old per tree). Along Herd Road, Osborne Road and Crofton Ferry near Duncan the ratios of 1 new to 1 old, 1 new to 1 old and 2 new to 1 old respectively, indicate a static population with continued defoliation in 1987.

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Table 1. Egg masses surveys, locations, diameter at breast height, number of new egg masses, number of old egg masses and ratio, Vancouver Forest Region, 1986.

Location	DBH (cm)	# New egg* masses per tree	# Old egg masses per tree	Ratio
Victoria	5	0.4	2.4	1:6
Sidney Island	-	2.3	4.3	1:2
Herd Road	5	3.4	2.8	1:1
Osborne Road	2	1.2	1.5	1:1
Crofton Ferry	4	4.4	2.6	2:1
Average	4	2.3	2.7	1:1

*Based on 10 branches per tree on 5 or 10 trees per site (depending on availability), sampled in October, 1986.

Barring climatic caused reductions or extensive parasitism, defoliation should be similar to 1986 in all areas but Victoria, where populations will start declining. Tree mortality is not usually associated with this pest and trees attacked usually refoliate the same year.

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