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SYDNEY

June 1990

Forest Tent Caterpillar in the Prince George Area

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Forest Insect and Disease Survey

Forest tent caterpillar populations are again causing widespread severe defoliation of trembling aspen and other deciduous trees and shrubs in and around the City of Prince George, in some cases for the fifth consecutive year. The high caterpillar populations followed defoliation over more than 100 000 ha in 1989, and were predicted to continue by Forestry Canada, Forest Insect and Disease Survey.

Cool, wet spring weather in 1990 only delayed the feeding in June, but high numbers have completely stripped deciduous trees in the Prince George area.

Defoliation is mostly severe in patches from just south of the Summit Lake area on Highway 97 north of Prince George, south to the Red Rock and Westlake areas, from the Eaglet Lake area east of the city to beyond the Chilah River on Highway 16 west of Prince George. Although populations in the Salmon Valley area which began 5 years ago have declined from the high levels present in 1989, most areas infested in 1989 are reinfested this year with a shift in populations to south of the original infestation.

The Forest Insect and Disease Survey unit of Forestry Canada will conduct aerial surveys in early July to map the extent and severity of the infestations.

Several mass collections of larvae are being examined to determine if any important diseases or parasites exist within the tent caterpillar populations. An update on the status of the pest will be issued later when area figures and information on potential diseases or parasites have been collated.

Egg surveys will be conducted by the Forest Insect and Disease Survey in September 1990 to provide a forecast for 1991.

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