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RUSTY TUSSOCK MOTH IN THE PRINCE GEORGE DISTRICT, PRINCE GEORGE REGION

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Feeding by rusty tussock moth larvae, **Orgyia antiqua badia**, defoliated conifers and deciduous trees and shrubs over more than 13 000 ha in the Prince George Forest District in 1992. This is the first time that an infestation of rusty tussock moth has been reported causing defoliation in the Prince George Forest Region.

Light defoliation over more than 11 000 ha of white spruce, alpine fir, lodgepole pine, Sitka alder and various herbaceous shrubs was noted in the headwaters of Wichcika, East Seebach, Seebach, Olsson and Angusmac creek drainages. Over 1600 ha of moderate defoliation was recorded around Mt. Averil. All defoliation occurred in the SBSf biogeoclimatic zone.

Complete defoliation of the current year's foliage was common on all age classes of white spruce throughout the infestation area. Occasional top-stripping of up to 2 metres was noted on single understory trees. Impact on the damaged trees should be limited to growth loss and occasional top-kill.

Outbreaks have occurred in small infestations of several hundred hectares in the southern regions of the province in the past. Last year in the Cariboo Forest Region, spruce plantations along the north arm of Quesnel Lake were defoliated by the rusty tussock moth. An estimate 98% of the larvae collected for parasite and disease rearing from the Quesnel Lake area were killed by a virus, the usual control agent of this pest.

The current area of infestation in the Prince George district is the largest ever reported in the province. Limited historical information on the rusty tussock moth makes population predictions for 1993 difficult. The small number of egg masses collected in 1992 could indicate that 1992 will be the only year of notable defoliation.

Forestry Canada will continue to monitor this pest in 1993.

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