

PEST REPORT

Pacific and Yukon Region • Pacific Forestry Centre • 506 West Burnside Road • Victoria, B.C. • V8Z 1M5

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Forest tent caterpillar, Prince George Forest Region Forecast for 1989

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Forest tent caterpillar, Malacosoma disstria, populations are predicted to increase and cause widespread defoliation in the Prince George area in 1989. Mostly severe defoliation is predicted from the Ness Lake area northeast towards the Salmon Valley, as well as the Hart Highlands area. Defoliation of ornamental trees will likely occur in some areas within the City of Prince George. Egg mass surveys at five locations by Forestry Canada's Forest Insect and Disease Survey (FIDS) in the fall of 1988 found an average of 60 new egg masses per tree. Studies have shown that an average of 11-19 new egg masses per tree usually results in severe defoliation.

Forest tent caterpillar populations have been increasing in the Salmon Valley area for the past three years. In 1988 over 43 280 ha of mainly trembling aspen was defoliated, up from 8000 ha in 1987 and 580 ha in 1986.

It should be noted that trees defoliated by the forest tent caterpillar usually refoliate to some degree by mid-late summer. It takes several consecutive years of severe defoliation, usually combined with drought or poor site conditions and stand age (overmaturity) before mortality occurs.

Homeowners can reduce populations by clipping and destroying egg masses during the winter months. The grey masses, covered with a silvery-brown protection layer, are found completely encircling small twigs. These are quite visible on small trees before leaf flush. Also, early spring larval colonies can be clipped and burned before the young larvae disperse to feed.

Once the larvae have dispersed and feeding is underway, insecticides may be considered where populations and resulting damage is of particular concern. The following insecticides are registered for use against the forest tent caterpillar in British Columbia. When using insecticides, remember to always follow the directions and application rates listed on the label.

Biological insecticides, containing Bacillus thuringiensis: Dipel 132;
THURICIDE 48LV;

Chemical insecticides: Sevin (various formulations);
ORTHO (ORTHENE);
Ambush 500 EC.

Forest Insect and Disease Survey will continue to monitor forest tent caterpillar populations and a further pest report will be issued after early season assessments and sampling of caterpillar populations is complete.