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# PEST REPORT

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PEST REPORT 94-3

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## LARGE ASPEN TORTRIX INFESTATIONS IN THE VANDERHOOF FOREST DISTRICT

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For the second consecutive year the large aspen tortrix, *Choristoneura conflictana*, has defoliated several thousand hectares of mostly mature trembling aspen in the Nechako River Valley.

Completely defoliated aspen trees in scattered patches of 5-500 hectares were noted from just west of Vanderhoof to Fort Fraser. The scattered pattern of infestations is caused by intermixing of farmland and coniferous forests with the aspen stands. The leaves webbed together with silken threads by the larvae, while feeding, are very noticeable along the highway. By the first of June larvae were beginning to drop to the understory aspen and herbaceous plants and shrubs to feed. Feeding will continue until mid-June followed by pupation. Due to the high populations and lack of host material, webbing and feeding of current growth has also been noted on white spruce. Conifers are not considered the usual host for the tortrix.

The feeding may cause reduced tree vigor and growth, occasionally killing the tree top and upper branches.

Infestations usually last from 2-3 years and often precede forest tent caterpillar outbreaks. Control is usually unnecessary because many natural biological agents combine to help keep populations in check. Assessments of parasite levels are in progress.

Forecasts of population levels in 1995 will be made following aerial surveys of defoliated areas.

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