

Gypsy Moth in Minnesota - Background

For more information on the gypsy moth, check: www.mda.state.mn.us/gypsymoth. You may also email a question or comment to: gypsy.moth@state.mn.us

Invasive Species

Gypsy moth is native to Europe and Asia and was accidentally introduced to North America (Massachusetts) in 1869 by an amateur entomologist. It is now a forest pest from maritime Canada south to North Carolina and west to Wisconsin.

In order to contain the populations, generally infested areas are quarantined by the federal government. Updated maps are available on the MDA website.

Life Cycle

Eggs hatch in late spring and caterpillars feed for 5-6 weeks.

In mid to late summer they stop feeding and pupate within a leathery shell in a sheltered spot.

Adult moths emerge from pupae, mate, lay hundreds of eggs in a single mass, and die.

Egg masses over-winter protected in a fuzzy, tan blanket of hair from the female's body.

Rapid Spread

Each female lays one egg mass containing between 500-1000 eggs. These masses are laid on just about anything and are often deposited on objects that humans carry to uninfested areas.

Larvae are light enough to blow away on a breeze and can land 1/2 mile away.

Gypsy moths in any life stage have few natural enemies that impact their populations.



Egg Mass



Caterpillar



Pupa



Adult Female

Adult Male



Costs

Homeowners must pay for removal and replacement of trees weakened or killed by gypsy moth. Property values may decline from tree loss.

Allergic reactions may develop from shed skins or droppings from caterpillars.

Hordes of caterpillars crawling over trees and structures are a nuisance that could lead to environmental damage and lost tourism dollars.

Extra expenses of inspections, regulations and treatments for nurseries, Christmas tree growers, timber and paper companies add up.

Damage

Caterpillars feed on the leaves of 300 species of trees and shrubs, favoring oak, aspen, and birch. Defoliation leaves trees vulnerable to disease, pests, and environmental stress. Each year, Gypsy Moth caterpillars strip the leaves from 1 million acres of forest in the United States. Over 1.5 million acres of trees were stripped bare in 2008.

Cooperative Gypsy Moth Program

Partner agencies strive to delay the establishment of gypsy moth in Minnesota through early detection and eradication for as long as is economically and ecologically feasible.

- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- USDA Forest Service
- University of Minnesota