

Keeping Track of the Gypsy Moth

The gypsy moth (*Lymantria dispar*) is a tree defoliator (leaf-eater) and a serious threat to forest, shade, and ornamental trees. Since its introduction into Massachusetts in 1869 from its native home in Europe, it has spread throughout the Northeastern United States infesting and defoliating millions of acres. The caterpillar stage of the moth's life cycle is responsible for the damage the pest causes, eating the leaves of trees in the spring. As they grow and reach maturity, the individual caterpillars consume tremendous amounts of leaf material per day. In outbreak situations, when their numbers get high enough, the caterpillars are capable of completely stripping the leaves off host trees over wide geographic areas. Repeated defoliation leads to tree stress and eventual death.

Although the natural spread of the gypsy moth has not reached all of the susceptible parts of the United States, the insect has been able to move long distances into new areas as a hitchhiker. Gypsy moth egg masses and other life stages are often moved on cars, recreational vehicles, logs, nursery stock, and outdoor household articles being transported in conjunction with household moves.

This artificial movement creates the potential for spot infestations in areas that were previously uninfested. To combat this unwanted spread, two agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)—the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Forest Service (FS)—work in close cooperation with State departments of agriculture to conduct a comprehensive gypsy moth program.



Delta trap.

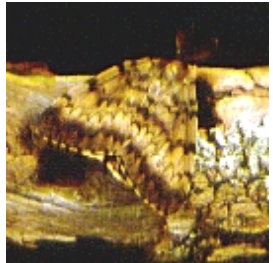
Milk carton trap.

Help Us Survey for Gypsy Moths

The traps in your yard and neighborhood are part of the survey portion of the gypsy moth program. Designed to capture male gypsy moths, these traps are used by Federal and State officials in their survey activities to track the spread of the moths. The focus of this work is to make early



The caterpillar stage of the gypsy moth feeds on the leaves of trees.



Gypsy moth male.

detections of low-level populations so other actions can be taken to disrupt the normal cycle of population establishment, buildup, and spread.

The traps come in two designs and may be green, orange, or brown. The smaller trap, named the delta trap after its shape, resembles a pup tent. The larger, longer one is called the milk carton trap. Both traps are baited with a lure that releases the female gypsy moth's natural hormonal scent, its pheromone. While the pheromone is highly attractive to male gypsy moths, it has no effect on people, plants, animals, or even other insects. Once a male moth enters a trap, it is either caught in the device's sticky lining (delta trap) or killed by a small insecticidal strip (milk carton trap).

Trapping

Your cooperation is needed to help prevent the establishment of the gypsy moth in your area. Trap results help scientists identify gypsy moth locations as precisely as possible. Pinpointing gypsy moth locations is difficult if traps are missing or disturbed, so please do not disturb the trap on your property.

If you have questions or wish to report a fallen or disturbed trap, please contact your nearest State department of agriculture office or the closest USDA APHIS or FS office.

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