

Asian spongy moth

EXOTIC PEST – CALL THE EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE IF SUSPECTED

What is it?

The Asian spongy moth (*Lymantria dispar*) is one of the most destructive pests of forest, horticultural and urban trees in the northern hemisphere. If this exotic pest is introduced into Australia it could cause extensive environmental and economic damage to our native bush, forests, orchards and gardens. The larval (caterpillar) stage of this pest causes heavy defoliation of trees and shrubs, killing them or increasing their susceptibility to other insect pests or diseases. Once introduced into a new area, the risk of establishment of the moth is extremely high because of its broad host range. The larvae feed on the foliage of more than 600 species of trees and other plants.

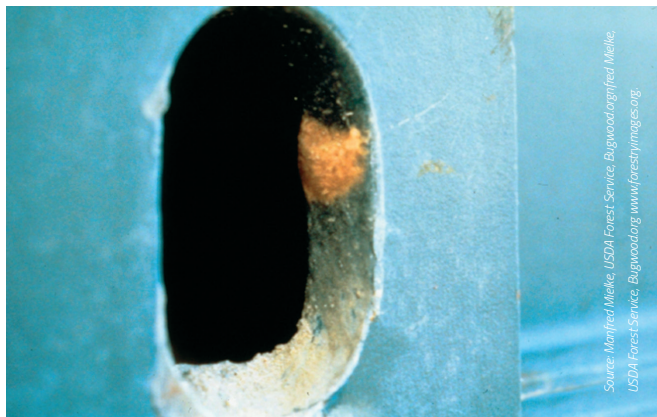
What do I look for?

The Asian spongy moth has four life stages: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupae (cocoon), and moth. The most likely means of entry into Australia is from egg masses deposited on board cargo ships, containers or packing material. The egg masses are usually covered in yellow or light tan fuzz from the abdomen of the female moth and contain 100–1,000 eggs. Egg masses are oval in shape and about 40mm long and 20mm wide.

The larval stage (caterpillar) is hairy and mature larvae range in size from 50–65mm long. They may be a variety of colours along the back, including black, grey or yellow, but they typically have two rows of spots on their back; five pairs of blue spots followed by six pairs of red spots (see picture). The pupal stage is dark reddish-brown and held in place by strands of silk.

Adult male moths have greyish-brown wings and a wingspan of 30–40mm, whereas the adult female moths are white with black markings and larger with a wingspan of around 40–70mm (see picture).

If you see any of these life stages, you should report them immediately to increase the chance of eradicating this pest before it can become established in Australia.



Asian spongy moth (*Lymantria dispar*) egg mass on a shipping container.



Asian spongy moth larva.



Asian spongy moth adult male (bottom right) and female (left).



Where is it found?

Originally from Asia, it is now found throughout eastern Russia, China, Korea and Japan. There have been several introductions of the pest into North America since the early 1990s which have been the subject of intensive control and eradication campaigns to prevent its establishment in the United States. The pest was also introduced into New Zealand in 2003 and subsequently eradicated.

Reporting

Growers may report suspected exotic pests to the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline 1800 084 881** or contact their relevant state agriculture or primary industries department. To minimise the risk of disease spread, samples should not be moved until they have been checked by an expert.

This fact sheet is part of the National Apple and Pear Industry Biosecurity Plan. For more information about the Biosecurity Plan, please contact PHA.

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1800 084 881