

White spotted tussock moth

Description

White spotted tussock moths (*Orgyia thyellina*) are medium sized with a 25–40 mm wingspan. In the female the forewing colour is dirty white with distinctive wavy brown and black markings, while in the male the forewings are brown with a wavy, mottled pattern. Females produced late in the season only have vestigial wings.

Eggs are white to buff in colour and are laid in clusters about the size of a 10 cent coin.

Young larvae are black and very hairy; mature larvae are about 30 mm long with four distinctive white tufts of hair, an orange stripe down each side and two yellow spots on the rear.

The white spotted tussock moth is found in China, Korea, Japan, Far Eastern Russia, and Taiwan. The first known record outside of its native range was in Auckland, New Zealand, in 1996, but this was subsequently eradicated with a spraying program.

Primary hosts

White spotted tussock moths are a pest of many forest and horticultural trees. The larvae feed on a wide range of hosts including Rose (*Rosa*), Birch (*Betula*), Ebony (*Diospyros*), Elm (*Ulmus*), Maple (*Acer*), Mulberry (*Morus*), Oak (*Quercus*), Willow (*Salix*), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and Pine (*Pinus*).

Symptoms

At first larvae skeletonise leaves, but as they grow the larvae devour all but the main vein and petiole.

What it can be confused with

There are native moths with similar larvae. These include the Painted pine moth (*Orgyia australis*) which also has a wide host range. Larvae need to be reared through to adult moths to enable specialist diagnosis. Any suspect larvae or adults should be reported.



Female moth

Pest and Diseases Image Library, Bugwood.org



Male moth

Pest and Diseases Image Library, Bugwood.org



Larval form of White spotted tussock moth

Haijun Koh, Flickr



Plant part affected

Larvae feed on the foliage of a range of species.

Age of plant

Outbreaks of white spotted tussock moth are driven more by the prevalence of susceptible species in the landscape than by tree age.

Time of year pest is most likely to be seen

Larvae and adults are present during spring and summer months. In Japan, there are two or three generations per year in which females show wing dimorphism. The spring or summer generation(s) are fully winged and capable of flight, but the autumn generation is wingless and mainly sedentary.

Further information

Field guide to exotic pests and diseases: White spotted tussock moth. Department of Agriculture. Available from <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/forestry/forests-timber>

Pest and Disease Image Library (PaDIL) White-spotted tussock moth. Available from www.padil.gov.au/pests-and-diseases/pest/main/136273

White-Spotted Tussock Moth. Ministry for Primary Industries. Available from www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests-diseases/forests/white-spotted-tussock-moth/

Hosking G, Clearwater J, Handiside J, Kay M, Ray J and Simmons N (2003) Tussock moth eradication – a success story from New Zealand. *International Journal of Pest Management* 49: 17–24.

If you see anything unusual, call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline

**EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE
1800 084 881**

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