

The Douglas-Fir Tussock Moth Biology and Life Cycle

Winter

The Douglas-fir tussock moth overwinters as eggs on cocoons. Look for cocoons on the underside of branches, on fences, and on other structures.

Egg mass surveys are conducted to locate new populations and plan treatment areas

NPV should be applied immediately following larval hatch



Young larvae hatch from egg masses from late May to early June and disperse on the wind.

Spring



Early feeding by small larvae gives foliage a "singed" appearance.

Mature larvae are easy to recognize by the prominent tufts on either end of their body.



Larvae feed voraciously on Douglas-fir and other hosts, stripping trees of old and new foliage.

Summer

Humans can be very sensitive to the thousands of small hairs on the caterpillars and on the cocoons. This reaction is known as TUSSOCKOSIS. Do not touch the insects with bare hands and avoid breathing in the hairs.

Larvae create cocoons on the underside of branches and any available structures.



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Tussock moth caterpillars devastate Douglas-firs, ponderosa pine and ornamental trees in backyards, by feeding on new and old needles.

Place pheromone traps to monitor populations



The female emerges from the cocoon, emits a strong pheromone to attract males, mates, and lays eggs on top of the cocoon.

Fall



Male moths have prominent antennae to detect pheromones emitted by the female moths.

Female moths are wingless and spend most of their life in the same location.



For more information on Douglas-fir tussock moth and its control, please contact:
British Columbia Ministry of Forests and Range, Southern Interior Regional Office, Kamloops, BC
http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/rsi/ForestHealth/Tussock_Moth.htm
Email: tussockmoth@gov.bc.ca

Photographs by D. Manastyrski, L. Maclauchlan and R. Rogan.

