



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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21 gypsy moths caught in Washington last summer

OLYMPIA – The gypsy moth—a destructive forest pest that causes millions of dollars of damage each year in the eastern and midwestern parts of the U.S.—continues to show up in Washington. The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) caught 21 gypsy moths at 17 sites this summer.

Gypsy moth trappers captured more than one moth at three sites. Three moths were lured to WSDA's small, cardboard tent traps at Fort Lewis, two moths at Kent and two at Point Roberts.

The 14 single-catch sites were at Belfair, Bellevue, Centralia, Federal Way, McCleary, North Bend, Olympia, Poulsbo, Redmond, Renton, Sequim, Tacoma, Wauna and Woodinville. These areas will be heavily trapped next summer.

WSDA placed 25,000 traps in the field in June and monitored them throughout the summer. WSDA employees are now conducting physical inspections of the multiple-catch sites, looking for additional evidence of gypsy moth activity, such as egg masses and pupal cases. State entomologists will review the results of the inspections before determining whether to propose an eradication treatment for next spring. All moths caught this summer underwent a DNA analysis and have been determined to be the European gypsy moth.

The gypsy moth is one of America's worst forest pests. It attacks more than 500 species of deciduous and evergreen trees, has defoliated millions of U.S. trees and spreads relentlessly once established. Gypsy moths normally arrive in Washington in the form of egg masses attached to outdoor articles, such as picnic tables, birdhouses, and children's toys brought here from infested states, primarily from the East Coast and upper Midwest. Some moths arrive on foreign ships docked at Washington ports.

The number of moths caught annually in Washington varies widely—ranging from a high of 1,315 moths in 1983, to a low of 17 in 2002. WSDA caught 24 moths at 10 sites in 2007, 75 moths at 18 sites in 2006, and 31 moths at 15 sites in 2005.

Permanent populations of the gypsy moth have never been detected in Washington.

In the 19 states where permanent populations exist, thousands of moths are caught each summer and thousands of acres are treated each spring. Wisconsin, for example, treated more than 116,000 acres this spring based on 368,034 moths caught in the summer 2007.

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