



Biosecurity New Zealand

Ministry for Primary Industries

Manatū Ahu Matua



How can you support the programme?

The spongy moth surveillance programme relies on the permission of property owners. They allow Field Officers to place a trap on their property and grant access for the Officer to check the trap every fortnight during the November – April survey season. Property owners can also assist by reporting back to Field Officers if there are any issues with a trap located on their property.

Without the co-operation and assistance from the public, the programme would be unable to operate.

If you are not currently hosting a spongy moth trap, but are approached by Biosecurity New Zealand-approved Field Officers to inspect your property for suitability, we hope that you are able to assist.

It should be noted that not all properties are suitable for traps. They need to be placed in specific locations to ensure the surveillance grid has no gaps, and the property needs host plant species favored by spongy moth caterpillars.

If you have a trap on your property and no longer want to participate, you can request the trap to be removed at any time.



Female spongy moth

SPONGY MOTH Surveillance Programme



If you find suspect egg masses, caterpillars or moths please call 0800 80 99 66

Ko Tātou This is Us
BIOSECURITY 2025

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Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Spongy moth surveillance Programme

The spongy moth surveillance programme was initiated in 1992 to provide assurance of New Zealand's freedom from this pest. It also provides early warning of spongy moth incursions, which can improve our chances of eradicating any outbreak.

There are currently four species of spongy moths (*Lymantria moths*) listed as regulated organisms for Aotearoa New Zealand.



Photo: asianSpongymoth.org

Male spongy moth

Spongy moth surveillance is undertaken in Aotearoa for several reasons. Firstly, due to our significant trade relationships with countries who have spongy moth. Trade provides a high-risk pathway for this pest to enter New Zealand.

Secondly, inspections of imported used vehicles and shipping containers are not 100 percent effective. Internationally, these are the most common means of spongy moth egg masses being transmitted.

What are the Impacts?

Spongy moth is both an economic and environmental high-impact pest. It is widespread in Europe and Asia and occurs in some areas of North America. Oak trees are a preferred host, but the moth has been recorded feeding on hundreds of tree species.

When large numbers of caterpillars are present, trees and plants can be stripped of all their foliage. This stress can potentially expose them to diseases or cause mortality. A major outbreak of spongy moth in New Zealand could destroy gardens, crops, forests, native bush, and impact our communities.

History

Since 1992 when surveillance began, the only detection of a spongy moth population in New Zealand occurred in Hamilton in 2003. Successful eradication was declared in May 2005.

How does the surveillance programme work?

The key tool is a pheromone called (+) disparlure that is very effective at attracting male moths into traps. The primary areas targeted for surveillance include ports, transitional facilities, and shipping container yards.



Photo: asianSpongymoth.org

Female spongy moth and egg mass

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Surveys can also occur along coastal buffer areas where ships come close to land. This is because spongy moth larvae can produce a silken thread which acts like a balloon, allowing them to travel long distances.

Approximately 1500 are traps strategically located throughout high-risk areas on suitable host tree species. Trap inspections occur every two weeks between November to April by Biosecurity New Zealand-approved Field Officers.

By targeting high-risk sites, placing traps to catch male moths on suitable host trees, and spacing traps to effectively cover large areas, the surveillance programme is highly efficient. The actual cost of the programme (approx. \$375,000 per annum) is funded by a biosecurity levy on high-risk goods entering New Zealand.

How can you help?

If you are approached by a Field Officer for permission to place a trap on your property for a season, we would be grateful for your participation. If you agree, the Field Officers will provide additional information and explain the process.



Photo: SPS Biota

Pheromone trap inspection