

FOREST TENT CATERPILLAR (*Malacosoma disstria*)**Refer to:**

Table 1; Group 2 (Page 60)

Monitoring Season

Early season (April – May)

Control Season

Early season (April – May) for pesticide and non-pesticide control activity

Rating

Insect pest

Hosts and Damage

- Prefers aspen but also other broadleaf trees and shrubs including birch, mayday and Saskatoon
- Defoliation by larvae, if light, has little effect or lasting damage
- Two or more years of defoliation can cause severe reduction in growth

Physical Characteristics

- Adults are stout-bodied moths light yellow to buff brown in colour with two dark bands on the fore wings and a wingspan of 35-45 mm
- Eggs are found on small twigs in bands that appear silvery in color when laid but turn dark brown with maturity
- Young larvae are black and hairy about 3 mm long and mature to 45-55 mm long with broad bluish lateral bands and white keyhole shaped markings on a brownish black background emerge when aspen buds begin to break
- Larvae leave a trail of silk wherever they go and when not feeding cluster together in crotches of larger branches and on the trunk of the tree; spin a yellowish-white cocoon

Biology

- One generation per year
- Larvae hatch in early spring (5 instars) and are gregarious (colony feeding)
- Outbreaks typically last 4 or 5 years

Why Manage

- Widely distributed; populations are manageable
- Public perception and complaints; control spread to private property
- To maintain native species balance and variety (biodiversity)
- To establish tolerable levels of damage; prevent reduced use of parks
- Increased need for vegetation replacement; reduced vegetation value
- Increased plant susceptibility to disease and other pests
- Maintenance standards; may lead to increased maintenance costs if not controlled

Monitoring Procedures

- Pre-control monitoring
- Post-control monitoring
- Spot checking

Control Procedures (Focus on controlling with non-pesticide methods)

- Physical/mechanical: Handpicking (egg band removal; larval control)
- Pesticide: Microbial pesticide *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki* (Btk); Malathion (foliar spray; truck mounted high pressure tank sprayer)
- Biological: None used at present



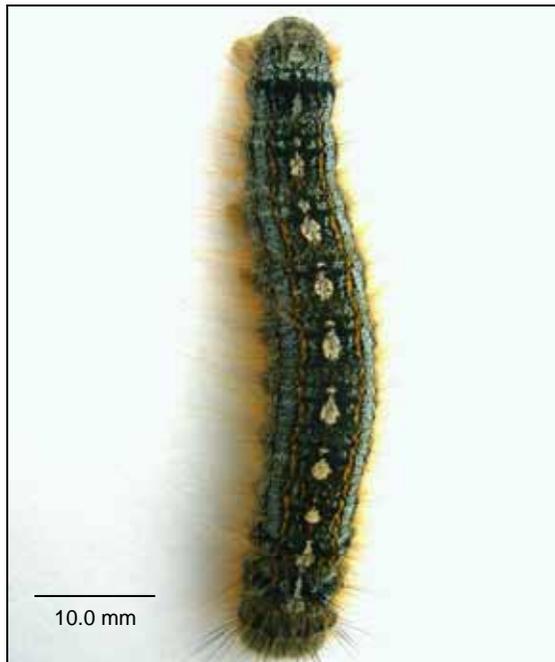
A



B



C



D

A) Damage and defoliation of a tree. B) Egg bands are usually attached around a branch that is approximately the size of a pencil. C) As the caterpillars mature they often cluster on tree trunks; this affords a good opportunity to control large numbers of larvae by physically removing and disposing of the cluster. D) Full grown larva.