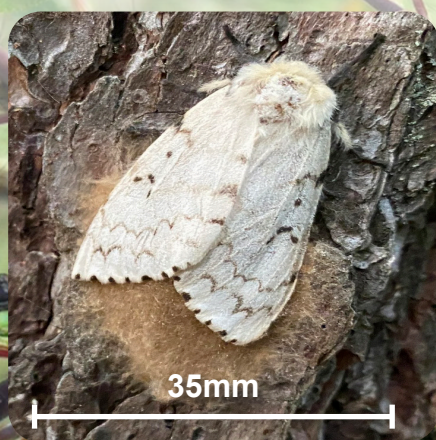




# Priority pest: Spongy moth



**Spongy moth**  
(*Lymantria dispar*)

## The pest and its impacts

**The larval stage of the spongy moth is a severe defoliator of a wide range of broadleaved trees and shrubs. This pest is not present in Australia.**

Caterpillars feed in groups, defoliating trees. Young caterpillars are extremely voracious resulting in branches and sections of a tree suddenly losing their leaves. Large infestations can result in defoliation of entire tree plantations.

Although spongy moths tend to remain in host trees for most of their lives, they are able to fly to colonise new forests. Long distance spread occurs through human activity such as the movement of infested plant parts, wood, nursery stock, machinery, and equipment as well as on cargo. Shipping containers are considered a major contributor to the spread of the pest worldwide.





## What to look for



- Pale to dark grey and hairy caterpillars (up to 7cm long) with distinctive blue and red spots along their body. Occasionally, they may have all-blue spots. Caterpillars less than 2cm long may lack the coloured spots.



- Female moths lay tan to rust coloured egg masses that are spongy in appearance, and close to the ground.



- Spongy moth larvae quickly devour foliage. In large numbers, the caterpillar can strip all the leaves from a tree.



- Spongy moths are notorious for their ability to defoliate a wide variety of trees. Severe cases can reduce tree growth and leave trees open to attack from other insects and diseases.

## How you can help: look, act, report

Monitor plants for signs of larvae, egg masses and excessive defoliation. Look for caterpillar activity both day and night as feeding patterns change with larval development.

If you see signs of spongy moth, report it immediately to provide the best chance of eradicating or containing this damaging pest. Every report you send plays a part in protecting WA's agricultural industries, natural environment and lifestyle.



### Report your observations

MyPestGuide® Reporter  
via app or online  
[mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au](http://mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au)

Pest and Disease Information Service  
(08) 9368 3080  
[padis@dpird.wa.gov.au](mailto:padis@dpird.wa.gov.au)



[agric.wa.gov.au/plant-biosecurity/spongy-moth-declared-pest](http://agric.wa.gov.au/plant-biosecurity/spongy-moth-declared-pest)