



Oak Processionary Moth (OPM): Update October 2019

Earlier this year plant health inspectors discovered and intercepted approximately 70 cases of oak processionary moth caterpillars on oak trees in England, Scotland and Wales.

Counties in England included Cambridgeshire, County Durham, Devon, Dorset, Essex, Gloucestershire, Greater Manchester, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, London, Merseyside, Middlesex, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Southampton, Staffordshire, Suffolk, Surrey, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Wiltshire and Yorkshire.

The Welsh Government confirmed three cases in Glamorgan and Flintshire, and the Scottish Government confirmed six cases, in Angus, Edinburgh, Fife, Glasgow and Inverness. See the interceptions map for details of locations (within 10km).

The map on the link below outlines the extent of the distribution of interceptions:
https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/documents/7315/OPM_10kmGrid_110919.pdf

The work undertaken by the Forestry Commission, Animal and Plant Health Agency and Devolved Administrations involved tracing imports and the destruction of infested trees and caterpillars. The surveillance work associated with this operation continues.

As a result of the interceptions earlier this year, strengthened measures on the importation of most species of oak into England have been put into place to protect native trees from the threat of OPM.

The measures permit imports of certain oak trees, if they come from OPM-free countries, from designated pest free areas including Protected Zones (PZ), or have been grown under complete physical protection for their lifetime.

In addition to the measures implemented by government, BALI is urging all members to remain vigilant for signs of oak processionary moth activity. The precautionary measures are necessary due to the risk posed to native oak trees, humans and some animals whilst the oak processionary moth is in its caterpillar life stage. The risks are twofold:

1. As a caterpillar, oak processionary moths are capable of defoliating large areas of oak trees. This leaves target trees vulnerable to other, external stresses, such as disease, drought or flooding.
2. The caterpillars have thousands of hairs which, when in contact with human or animal skin, can cause unpleasant rashes. In isolated cases, the hairs can cause more serious issues such as sore throats, breathing difficulties and eye problems. The hairs are also commonly found in the nests they live in.

Reporting

All sightings of OPM should be reported to Defra via the Tree Alert system. See link, below.

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British
Association
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<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/tree-alert/>

Identification

Photos of oak processionary moth, and the associated caterpillar and nest may be reviewed at the following link: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/pest-and-disease-resources/oak-processionary-moth-thaumetopoea-processionea/>

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