



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
MAINE FOREST SERVICE
168 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

AMANDA E. BEAL
COMMISSIONER

November 16, 2021

Dear Town Manager,

To facilitate response by towns and their residents, I am in touch to provide notice of **high or moderate detected populations** of Browntail Moth (BTM). MFS conducts annual BTM surveys, and in the last several years, we have seen a dramatic increase in the BTM population.

Browntail moth caterpillars have hairs that can cause a rash similar to poison ivy and respiratory distress in sensitive individuals. The hairs persist for years and can cause problems when mowing or other activities stir them up.

In late-summer 2021, particularly in Waldo, Knox, Kennebec, Cumberland, and Androscoggin Counties, damage from newly-hatched caterpillars could be mapped from the air (an email was sent with an attached map). This mapping and other surveys indicate that populations are very high in parts of some towns and abundant enough to cause significant discomfort in a far broader area.

This year's overwintering web survey will be conducted this winter, and results will be available in early spring. The survey is conducted from the roadside in areas that have previously experienced problems and expands outward to define the generally affected area. None of the surveys are exhaustive; people need to check the trees around them to understand BTM populations and the risk of encountering hairs at a finer scale. **Mid-December through March is the best time to do that.**

The [MFS BTM website](#)* has more information, including:

- [Description of the BTM and how to control it](#)
- [Survey resources](#), including what the overwintering webs look like,
- [A list of Licensed Pesticide Applicators who conduct browntail moth control work](#)—those interested in hiring contractors for management should make contacts in the winter due to high demand for services,
- Topics ranging from biology to management to State Law specific to BTM control near marine waters are found in the recently updated frequently asked questions [page](#).

We encourage towns to help educate residents and visitors about BTM and encourage and conduct management where practical. The MFS can provide technical advice and assistance for identification and management and all the information on our website is available for electronic distribution or printing, a limited number of printed [informational brochures](#) are also available. Consider [signing up for our newsletters](#), and sharing the information found within them.

Sign up for our December Quarterly Municipal Emerald Ash Update, which will feature an update on emerald ash borer and its management and provide an update on the browntail moth situation. Please contact foresthealth@maine.gov to register or for more information.

In 2022 we are encouraging our partners to schedule awareness-raising events and promote management of browntail moth in February. This effort could include organizing groups to map infestations on the town and school properties,

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18 ELKINS LANE, HARLOW BUILDING



hosting a public service web-clipping event, hosting a contest for the most webs clipped or other community and knowledge building activities.

In closing, browntail moth populations will be elevated again next year and until the outbreak collapses. The MFS and our partners are here to provide technical advice and assistance in response to this pest. We encourage you to join us in providing education, encouraging management, and conducting management where feasible.

Sincerely,

Thomas Schmeelk

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[*http://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/invasive_threats/browntail_moth_info.htm](http://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/invasive_threats/browntail_moth_info.htm)