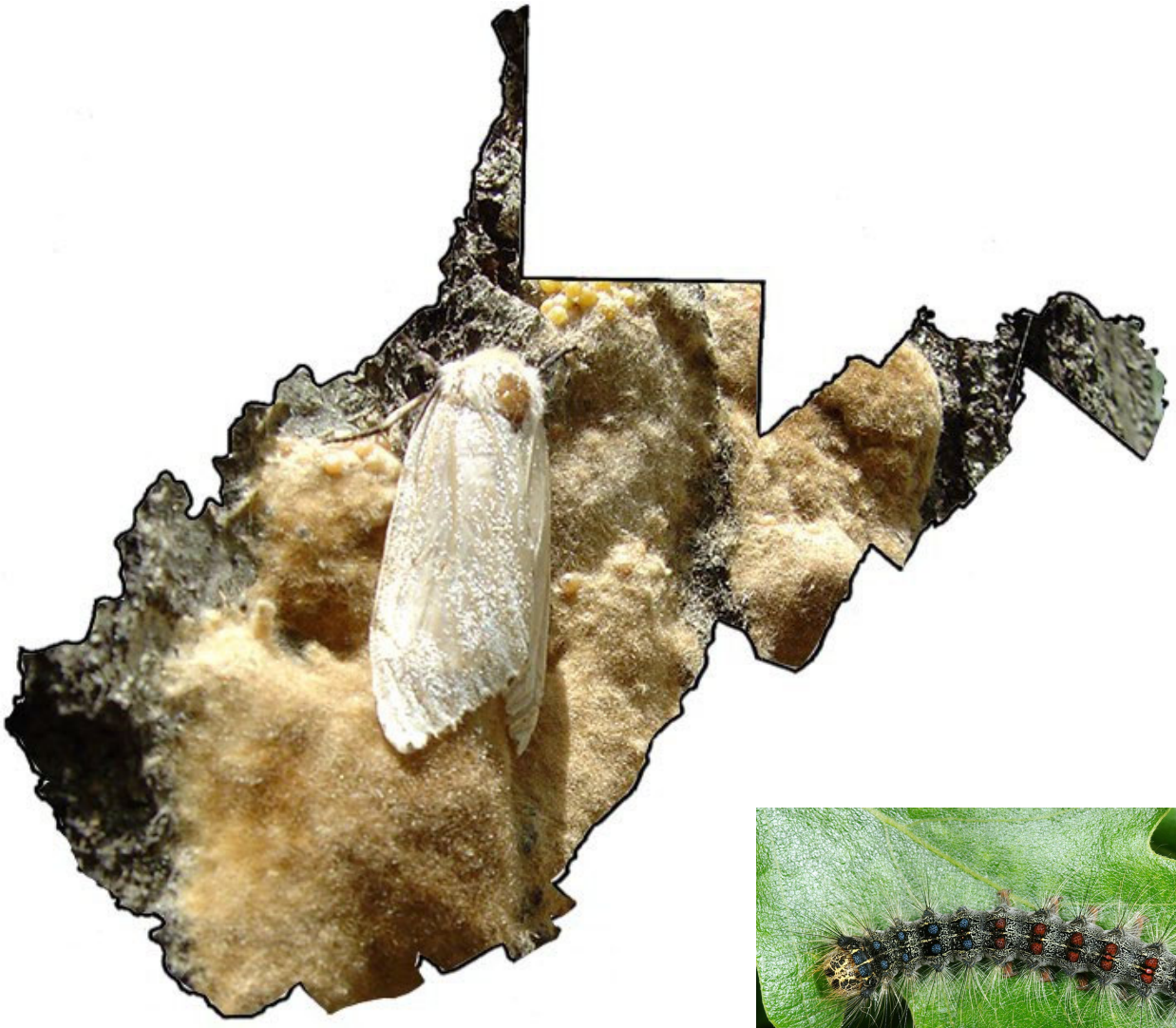
The West Virginia Department of Agriculture

Spongy Moth (*Lymantria dispar*)

Cooperative Suppression Program



The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) is urging landowners to sign up for the Spongy moth *Lymantria dispar* (formerly known as Gypsy moth) Cooperative Suppression Program. The program focuses on protecting landowners' forested acreage from the devastating effects caused by the Spongy moth. The sign-up period runs from **July 1, 2026** until **August 31, 2026**.

The first adult Spongy moth males were trapped in West Virginia in 1972, and the first caterpillars were found in 1978. "The *Lymantria dispar* (also known as Spongy moth or Gypsy moth) is a non-native, invasive insect that feeds on hundreds of species of trees and shrubs, including West Virginia hardwoods", said WVDA Plant Industries Director Andy Stotts. "Defoliation by *Lymantria dispar* caterpillars can weaken trees, making them susceptible to other pests and diseases. The program helps safeguard our forests from further damage."

HOW SERIOUS IS THE SPONGY MOTH PROBLEM?

"West Virginia's forests are one of our state's most important resources. From tourism to our timber industry, our forests are an important economic driver," says Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt. "As we face more invasive species such as the Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) *Lycorma delicatula*, we hope people will take advantage of programs like these."

Spongy moths pose a huge risk for West Virginia's timber economy, recreational opportunities, and can have adverse effects on native wildlife through food loss and changes in habitat. In addition, some individuals may experience health related problems if they encounter large quantities of Spongy moth caterpillars which could result in an allergic reaction. Spruce, pine, and hemlocks die after just a single heavy defoliation[1] and hardwood tree mortality, after two successive years of defoliation can reach as high as 80%. Oaks and oak-hickory type trees are preferred by this insect and these trees make up about 77% of West Virginia's woodlands.

[1]*Studies by the WVDA and the West Virginia Division of Forestry (WVDOF) confirm a 25% mortality rate after one year of heavy defoliation can be expected in timber stands if left untreated.*

WHERE IS THE INFESTATION CURRENTLY?

Spongy moth county locations are regulated by the USDA Spongy Moth Quarantine (7CFR 301.45) and the WVDA Spongy Moth Quarantine. Those counties are Barbour, Berkeley, Braxton, Brooke, Calhoun, Doddridge, Fayette, Gilmer, Grant, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hancock, Hardy, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Lewis, Marion, Marshall, McDowell, Mercer, Mineral, Monongalia, Monroe, Morgan, Nicholas, Ohio, Pendleton, Pleasants, Pocohontas, Preston, Raleigh, Ritchie, Summers, Taylor, Tucker, Tyler, Upshur, Webster, Wetzel, Wirt, Wood, and Wyoming.

WHAT IS THE COOPERATIVE SUPPRESSION PROGRAM?

The Spongy moth program is between landowners, the West Virginia Department of Agriculture and the USDA Forest Service (USDA-FS) which uses aerial treatments to minimize the damage to forests and reduce the impact of the Spongy moth in future years.[2] Spongy moth treatments are **(BTK) *Bacillus thuringiensis*** or **Mimic® (Tebufenozide)**. Landowners may request the treatment they prefer, however, final approval for use will depend on the site evaluation conducted by the WVDA.[3] Evaluation of the site will determine if the area meets the criteria set forth on the pesticide label and other possible restrictions.

[2]*The treatments are aimed at suppressing the insect and **will not** be done with the intent of eradicating the pest.*

[3]*HOA/POA organizations will need to discuss with landowners on choosing **ONE** treatment option for that block.*

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY LAND QUALIFIES AND IF I NEED TO PARTICIPATE?

The WVDA will conduct an egg mass survey on your property upon request and provide other information about the Spongy moth population in your area.

Generally, forest land being managed for timber should have a concentration of **500 egg masses per acre** to be considered for treatment. However, USDA-FS research shows that the concentration could go as high as **1,000 – 1,200 egg masses per acre** and still obtain adequate timber management protection. Other factors like whether the population is building or declining and/or the size of the egg masses must be taken into consideration before the final decision concerning treatment is made.

In wooded developments or residential areas where the nuisance factor is significant, **500 egg masses per acre are required** but consideration will also be given to treating areas when the potential for large

numbers of windblown caterpillars exist. Potential for windblown caterpillars is defined as a count **greater than** 1,000 egg masses per acre within 1 mile of the proposed treatment block. There is a higher risk of this happening when high egg mass densities occur at higher elevations or to the south and west of the proposed treatment blocks.

Historically, there have been a number of areas that did not conform to the general guidelines and yet large areas were defoliated where egg mass counts were below **500 egg masses per acre**. This simply serves to demonstrate the unpredictability of this insect when we try to apply these general guidelines across an entire infested area.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR TREATMENT?

The minimum acreage required to participate in the program is **50 contiguous acres of woodland** with no exclusions. Adjoining landowners may combine their properties to meet the acreage requirement and in doing so submit one application with a single coordinator. Blocks of less than 100 acres can have no more than 25 acres of exclusion or non-spray area(s). The minimum exclusion size is 10 acres.

If electrical transmission lines, communication towers, etc. are present on the land and could present a hazard and safety risk for aerial spraying, the proposed treatment block may have to be modified or excluded.

No billing will be made or egg mass surveys conducted on blocks LESS than 50 acres.

HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATIONS/ PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATIONS

HOA/POA must contact individual lot owners and provide a complete listing of all lot owners to the WVDA. Additionally, a list of lot owners **NOT** wanting to participate or objecting to treatment must be included upon application submission. A map must be included that shows the participating and non-participating/objecting lot owners. The WVDA will determine if the lot owners who do not want to participate can be logistically removed from the proposed treatment area. This may potentially disqualify the HOA/POA from the program. All lot owners objecting to treatment will be buffered an additional 150 feet outside their property boundaries. The HOA/POA coordinator for the property must contact lot owners to discuss treatment material as the entire block will need to be treated with either BTK or Mimic® if it qualifies.

Please note that keys or combination locks must be provided with the application at time of sign up in order to facilitate the egg mass survey evaluation.

HOW CAN I SIGN UP?

The *Lymantria dispar* program will start accepting egg mass surveys applications from landowners starting **July 1, 2026**. Applications and brochures are available at the WVDA website at: https://agriculture.wv.gov/forms/plant-industries-forms/ or https://agriculture.wv.gov/divisions/plant-industries/forest-health-protection/. Landowners may also obtain applications at local WVU Extension offices and WVDA field offices in Charleston (304-558-2212) or New Creek (304-788-1066).

The property owner is responsible for providing an original 7.5-minute topographic map or aerial photo with the property boundaries clearly marked, or an ESRI shape file projected in UTM Zone I7-Nad 83 is also acceptable. If you need further assistance in marking the boundaries of your land, contact your local WVDA Forest Health Protection Specialist to arrange an appointment.

Applications must be submitted by **August 31, 2026** and once received a forest health specialist will visit the proposed treatment area to determine if the level of *Lymantria dispar* infestation meets program guidelines. The area selected for treatment will be squared off to establish a manageable treatment block, which will allow for the most effective aerial treatment. Please note that some of the land MAY NOT be treated after the boundary is delineated and the area surveyed.

A final decision to participate in the program must be confirmed by signing a contract and submitting a treatment deposit with the WVDA by early **December 2026**. The landowner or block coordinator will be notified via mail. A **non-refundable** treatment deposit invoice will be included in the mailing and must be paid by **December 15, 2026**.

Participation in the spring treatment program must be confirmed by signing a contract, signature map provided by the WVDA, and by submitting a non-refundable treatment deposit.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

A **non-refundable** survey deposit of **five dollars ($5.00) per acre**, with a $3,000 maximum for individual landowners and a $10,000 maximum for residential developments and HOA/POA. This deposit must be sent in with the application and will be applied toward treatment cost if the property qualifies. Treatment costs vary from year to year depending on the aerial cost (i.e. fuel, pesticide, and spray application). Contact your local WVDA representative for the previous years cost and current years estimated cost.

The landowners/block coordinators should be prepared to **pay the total cost of the aerial treatment**. The estimated maximum cost will be on the deposit invoice. A final invoice will be mailed which will indicate the remaining balance which will need to be paid before treatment is conducted. Compared to private landowners contracting independently the WVDA should be able to secure a cheaper price.

IS SPRAYING AN EFFECTIVE OPTION?

Yes! Treatment materials such as **BTK** and **Mimic®** are effective in preventing defoliation and the rapid spread of the Spongy moth.

BTK (Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki)
This bacterium is commonly found in forest soils worldwide and has become one of the most valuable biological pesticides used in a variety of agricultural, forestry, and urban pests. Safe for humans and animals.

Mimic® (Tebufenozide)
Tebufenozide is a pesticide that is classified as an insect growth regulator. This means that once exposed the caterpillars are unable to molt and grow, this will inhibit the insect from reaching maturity and reproducing. It can be applied via air or ground and is successful on all population densities.

HOW DO I PAY?

Please make the check payable to the **West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA)** and mail the application and survey deposit to:

West Virginia Department of Agriculture
ATTN: Plant Industries Division
1900 Kanawha Blvd., East
Charleston, WV 25305

The WVDA recommends that participants utilize trackable mail (Fed-Ex, UPS, United States Postal Service, etc.) when sending payments and paperwork. Landowners are encouraged to contact the Charleston office (304-558-2212) or email tmoles@wvda.us to provide the tracking number. Fax will **not** be accepted.

HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

For more information, contact WVDA *Lymantria dispar* (Spongy Moth) Program Coordinator Scott Hoffman ghoffman@wvda.us or Region 3 Coordinator Jeff Johnson jjohnson@wvda.us

2021

West Virginia Department of Agriculture
Kent A. Leonhardt, Commissioner
Amie Minor-Richard, Deputy Commissioner

SPONGY MOTH (LYMANTRIA DISPAR) COOPERATIVE SUPPRESSION PROGRAM

Egg Mass Survey Request Application _____COUNTY

Instructions*:** Proposed spray blocks must be a minimum of ***50 contiguous acres. Attach a copy of a 7.5- minute topographic map with the ***property boundary clearly marked*** on it. A plat map should be provided to verify boundaries. A Farm Service Agency aerial photo can be used to mark fields that need to be omitted. An ESRI shape file, projected in UTM Zone 17, NAD 83 Datum, can be provided by the forest industry. ***Special Note: Homeowners Associations must provide a complete listing and map of all property owners participating and not wanting to participate/objecting within the HOA/POA. Please see brochure for more information.***

A non-refundable survey deposit of $5.00 per acre is required to participate ($3,000.00 maximum for individual landowners and $10,000.00 maximum for HOA/POA). Use one application for each separate block of 50 acres or more.

Fill out the information below and on reverse and return, along with your property boundary map and your **$5.00 per acre** survey deposit to:
West Virginia Department of Agriculture
ATTN: Plant Industries Division
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305

Applicant Information

_____
Applicants Name

_____
Development or Business Name

_____ (____) _____ (____) _____
Applicant's Mailing Address Home Phone Work Phone

_____ (____) _____ (____) _____
City State Zip Cell Phone Fax

_____
E-mail address

Local Contact Information

_____ (____) _____ (____) _____
Local Contact for Absentee Landowner Home Phone Work Phone

_____ (____) _____ (____) _____
Local Contact's Mailing Address Cell Phone Fax

_____
City State Zip

_____
E-mail address

Remarks_____

_____

Applicant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

APPLICANT, PLEASE COMPLETE SITE-SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON REVERSE:

2021

Applicant Site Specific Information

_____

_____

General Property Location (e.g.) 4 miles South of New Creek on Rt. 220 – Turn left on Valley View Road - 500 feet on right

(1) Total block acres_____ (2) Total forested acres_____

(3) Total exclusion acres_____ (4) Total spray acres_____
(Exclusion minimum is 10 acres)

(5) Have you applied for treatment through the WVDA in the past? Yes No. _____Last year applied

(6) If yes, do you wish to use the same property boundaries as previously submitted? Yes No

(7) Was your property treated last year? Yes No. _____Spray material used

(8) Percentage of preferred host trees in proposed treatment block _____%
e.g. % of oak, birch, alder, apple, aspen and basswood on property

(9) Percent forest canopy cover in proposed treatment block _____%

(10) Forest type is (check one) Wooded, no permanent residences
Wooded residential, permanent residences
Wooded recreational, e.g. state park, state forest, resorts

(11) Number of property owners included in proposed spray block _____

(12) Is property gated? Yes No Combination Lock #_____***Please note that keys must be provided with this application unless the gate will be left unlocked when contacted by the WVDA.***

(13) Is any portion of the property restricted? Yes No. If yes explain _____

(14) Check or list any potential hazards such as. High antennas or towers
High power lines
Open bodies of water.
Other _____

Official use only

Arcview # _____-_____-_____ Egg Masses per Acre _____

Date Surveyed_____/_____/_____Surveys Completed_____Blow-in-Potential □ yes □ no

Surveyed by: _____Qualify for Treatment □ yes □ no

Presence of Virus □ yes □ no Presence of Fungus □ yes □ no EM Size □ dime □ nickel □ quarter

Quad 1_____Quad 2_____Quad 3_____Quad 4_____

2021