European Gypsy Moth Survey in Progress

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and your State government need your help to track and prevent the spread of an invasive pest called the European gypsy moth (*Lymantria dispar*). The traps that we have placed on trees in your neighborhood are part of an important survey of the moth. Please do not move the traps.

The gypsy moth is a serious threat to forest, shade, and ornamental trees. Feeding on the leaves of at least 300 host species, gypsy moth caterpillars defoliate and weaken the trees that make up our national forests and community landscapes. In heavy infestations, the caterpillars can completely strip the leaves from host trees over wide geographic areas. If repeated, this defoliation will cause the trees to weaken and eventually die.

To fight the gypsy moth, two USDA agencies—the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Forest Service—partner with State departments of agriculture. Together, we carry out gypsy moth survey, regulatory, eradication, and outreach efforts. Our goal in surveying is to find new gypsy moth infestations early, before populations can establish, grow, and spread. Your cooperation in these efforts will help to stop the spread of gypsy moth.
Q. Is gypsy moth a serious pest?
A. Yes. The gypsy moth was accidently introduced into the United States in 1869 and continues to be one of the most destructive tree pests in our country. Native to Europe, the gypsy moth has spread throughout the northeastern United States and into areas of the Midwest, infesting and defoliating millions of acres of trees.

Q. How does the gypsy moth spread?
A. Although female gypsy moths can’t fly, the insect can move long distances as a hitchhiker. It often spreads to new locations when people moving from an infested area unintentionally transport gypsy moth egg masses and other life stages on outdoor household items, such as vehicles, firewood, nursery stock, and lawn furniture. This human-assisted movement creates “spot” infestations and advances the pest’s spread into areas that were previously gypsy moth-free.

Q. What do the gypsy moth traps look like, and how do they work?
A. The traps are green, orange, or brown and are made of plastic-coated cardboard. The smaller “delta” trap looks like a pup tent with openings on each end; the taller and larger trap looks like a milk carton and is named accordingly. Both traps are baited with a lure that attracts the male moth but has no effect on people, animals, or other insects. Once the male moth enters a trap, it is either caught in the sticky lining (delta trap) or killed by a small, insecticidal strip (milk carton).

Q. Are the gypsy moth traps safe?
A. The traps pose no risk to people, pets, or wildlife.

Q. How can I support the gypsy moth survey?
A. Talk to your family and friends about the survey and why it’s important. The gypsy moth traps are in host trees throughout the summer—please do not move them. Pinpointing gypsy moth locations is difficult if traps are missing or disturbed. If you see a trap on the ground, locate the handwritten identification number on the outside of the trap, and call the phone number listed below to report it.

Q. What can I do to help keep gypsy moth from spreading?
A. Know the quarantines and requirements in your area, especially if you’re relocating. Find out more at YourMoveGypsyMothFree.com. Also, become familiar with the signs of a gypsy moth infestation and report any findings at www.HungryPests.com.

Q. Where can I get more information?
A. If you have questions or wish to report a fallen trap, call the phone number listed below, or contact your State agriculture department (www.nationalplantboard.org/member) or nearest USDA office (www.aphis.usda.gov/planthealth/sphd).