

September 19, 2004

NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

***DENNIS SMITH
COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT
GREGG COUNTY***

FALL WEBWORM

The fall webworm is a common pest of trees. It attacks more than 88 different kinds of plants, including many fruit, nut and ornamental trees and shrubs. It does not attack conifers (pines and other needle-bearing trees).

Fall webworms are known for the large, unsightly webs they produce. Heavy infestations are rarely fatal, but if they occur repeatedly over several years they can stress trees and make them more susceptible to drought, disease or other insect pests.

The feeding preferences of fall webworms vary from one place to another. Oak, hickory and pecan are most often attacked in East Texas.

The fall webworm moth is white and has a wing span of 1 to 1 1/2 inches. Sometimes there are small, dark spots on the forewings. Full-grown larvae are approximately 1 inch long, pale green or yellow, and covered with tufts of long, white and black hairs.

Fall webworms often cover entire branches with their webs. In extreme infestations whole trees may be covered. Larvae feed within the web, eating the tender parts of leaves and leave the larger veins and midrib.

Fall webworms overwinter as pupae on the ground or on rough tree bark. The moths emerge from silken cocoons in the spring to disperse and mate. Female moths deposit hair-covered egg masses on the underside of the leaves of their food plants. An egg mass may be deposited in either a single or double layer and can contain up to 600 eggs. Each female moth will deposit only one egg mass. Egg masses of the walnut caterpillar, another common pest on pecans, are not covered with hairs.

Soon after webworm eggs hatch the larvae begin to build a silk web. As larvae consume leaves within the web, they expand the web to take in

more foliage. All larvae within a web are the offspring of a single egg mass. Larvae will molt six or seven times before leaving the webbing to pupate. The life cycle from egg to adult requires approximately 50 days.

Fall webworms can often be controlled without insecticides by removing and destroying any leaves that contain egg masses. Larvae may be knocked out of low-hanging webs with a stick or broom, and into a box or garbage bag for disposal. Or, webs can be pruned from smaller branches.

Many beneficial insects attack the egg and larval stages of fall webworm. You can help these predators and parasites get to their fall webworm prey by tearing open the webs.

If webs are too numerous or too high in a tree to deal with individually, insecticides can be used to prevent damage. Hose-end sprayers or commercial high-pressure sprayers are best for reaching upper portions of tall trees. Because webworm larvae remain inside their webbing, insecticide sprays must penetrate the web to be effective. For best control, apply insecticides after eggs hatch and before larvae develop dense webs.

Insecticides containing acephate (Orthene®), *Bacillus thuringiensis* (B.T.), carbaryl (Sevin®), or malathion are effective. Insecticides containing B.T. are selective for caterpillars and do not harm beneficial insects; however, they must be applied when caterpillars are small for effective control.

Not all insecticides are registered for fall webworm on all sites and commodities. It is up to the user to read the label to make sure the insecticide is cleared for the site and commodity. Always read and follow carefully the instructions on the pesticide label.

evening meal no later than Monday.

Dennis Smith can be contacted at the Gregg County Extension Office by e-mail at dg-smith@tamu.edu or telephone at: 903-236-8429.

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