

What precautions should I take?

- ✓ Always wear thick clothing, rubber gloves, Wellington boots and as far as possible cover all bare skin.
- ✓ Always wear rubber gloves (not woolly ones.)
- ✓ If you are spraying insecticide follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- ✓ Always spray when the weather is fine and there is no wind or rain to avoid drift or run-off problems.
- ✓ It is also advisable to wear goggles
- ✓ Take additional care if you decide to use a ladder as you remove nests high up in trees.
- ✓ Protective clothing should be thoroughly rinsed in clean water after use as the irritant hairs will adhere to it.

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Conserve other wildlife

Brown Tail Moths are often found in the Southern counties of the UK but have rarely been recorded here in Huntingdonshire.

Take care not to destroy all other wildlife especially if you do have to spray. These chemicals can eradicate other insects and cause harm to mammals and birds.



There are also some other moths including the Lackey Moth and Spindle Ermine Moth which eat tree or shrub foliage and make tents, so it is important to be sure what you are dealing with.

Neither of these cause harm to humans, but the Lackey Moth caterpillar looks similar.



(Lackey moth Caterpillar)

They are black in colour when they first appear in April, but soon develop blue, white and orange stripes with an overall covering of reddish/brown hairs. Noticeably, they do not have the red spots of the Brown Tail Moth.

All three are communal insects and tend to live in colonies for most of their lives constructing thick webs of silk (tents) mainly for protection.

Brown Tail Moth Caterpillar



Brown Tail Moth Caterpillar

Brown Tail Moth caterpillars can devastate plants and trees and cause rashes in humans.

This leaflet offers advice and information on how you can help to prevent the spread of the Brown Tail Moth.

As you can see from the photograph, the caterpillar of the Brown Tail Moth is brown, has a dotted white line down each side and two very distinctive red dots on the back of its tail. It is the hairs that can irritate skin.



(Brown tailed moth caterpillar)

Why is it such a problem?

It is a voracious eater of vegetation, especially in the spring, and although it prefers hawthorn and blackberry, it will eat practically any type of tree or bush. Heavily infested trees are weakened by the loss of foliage, consequently growth is poor and fruits fail to mature for several seasons which is a problem for the gardener. The caterpillar also releases irritant hairs into the air which cause skin irritation, and can affect some people quite severely.



What if I get a rash?

If you are unfortunate to get a rash, it will only normally last 2-3 days. During this time it will be very irritable but you should not scratch.

Some of the relief can be contained by applying calamine lotion. If the rash persists, see your doctor.

Can the Council treat the infestation?

Unfortunately not unless the moths are on Council owned land, because the Brown Tail Moth caterpillar is not a recognised public health hazard.

If the land is privately owned, it is the responsibility of the landowner. Local pest contractors may be able to help if you do not want to clear them yourself.

How do I know if I have an infestation in my garden?



First of all by seeing individual caterpillars or areas of trees and bushes that have lost all their leaves where the caterpillars have been feeding.

The caterpillars live in groups and you may also see the communal "tents" which they use mainly for shelter from bad weather but also for hibernation in the winter. These clumps of cobweb like material will release irritant hairs when disturbed, it is important, therefore to take protective measures when carrying out any treatment.

Can I treat them myself?

Yes, depending on the time of the year you can carry out treatment but you must take adequate protective measures to avoid skin irritation.

May and June

The caterpillars emerge particularly during warm weather and can be treated when they are out of their nests using a chemical spray. The most suitable and widely available chemical is called a Pyrethroid and is sold under various names at garden centres and chain stores. It is not effective when the caterpillars return to their nests in the evening and during bad weather.



At these times it is much better to physically remove the nest using secateurs to cut them and drop them into a plastic bag which should be

sealed and either burnt, if it is safe to do so, or sealed in a second plastic bag and put in your grey refuse wheeled bin.

If you choose the burning option, please take into consideration your neighbours.

September and October

The caterpillars re-emerge and although not so apparent as in the spring, their feeding will cause leaves at the top of the tree or shrub to turn brown. They can still be very effectively dealt with by the methods described above.

Winter

They stay in their tents and as the leaves drop these become very visible. The tents can be cut out at this time of the year but insecticide spray is largely ineffective.

Remember! Always take proper precautions when carrying out treatment