



DOVE
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Brown-tail moth (*Euproctis chrysorrhoea* syn. *Phaeorrhoeus*)

A locally important pest of blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and sea buckthorn (*Hippophaë rhamnoides*); in some years it can attack ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), crab apple (*Malus*), dogwood (*Cornus*), elder (*Sambucus*), false acacia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*), ornamental cherry (*Prunus*), ornamental pear (*Pyrus*), privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), willow and willow (*Salix*).

DESCRIPTION

The adult has a 30-38mm wingspan; the wings are white but fore-wings of the male sometimes have a few black dots. The head and thorax are white and fluffy; the abdomen is dark brown with a large anal tuft of hair.

The larvae are 35-40mm long, black/grey with tufts of gingery-brown hairs arising from brownish verrucae; two rows of bright red marks down the back, a series of downy white patches towards each side and bright, orange-red glands on the sixth and seventh abdominal segments. Their heads are black.

The pupa is 15-18mm long; brownish-black and hairy.



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LIFECYCLE

Adults occur in July and August and lay eggs in batches on leaves or stems. They are covered with brown hairs from the female's anal tuft.

The eggs hatch from mid-August to early September and the larvae then construct a strong, silken, communal retreat for shelter. The larvae feed on foliage in decreasing numbers until the end of October and then hibernate.

Activity is resumed in the following April with the larvae appearing on the outside of the webbing in increasing numbers, to bask in the spring sunshine; little or no feeding occurs until May. Young foliage is then attacked and as the larvae grow, they wander further from their communal tent and start spinning additional, less substantial webs and establish trails of silk along the branches. In the later stages of the development, when they are about 25mm long, they can become solitary and may wander away to feed elsewhere. Individuals are fully grown by late June and they then spin silken cocoons between the leaves, wither singly or in groups, and pupate, adults emerging about two weeks later.

DAMAGE

The larvae are voracious feeders, especially in their later instars, and often cause considerable defoliation of roadside hedges; their hairs can also constitute a public nuisance, sometimes requiring local authorities to conduct eradication campaigns. On ornamentals, feeding damage may be of considerable significance; the larval tents are also disfiguring.

CONTROL

Where necessary, larval tents should be cut out during the winter months and burnt. Alternatively, apply a persistent, contact insecticide in about mid-September, when all eggs have hatched but before the protective tents become too dense. Products such as Toppel 100 EC and Decis are suitable. Use a wetting agent to increase the penetration of the product into the silky tent. Spraying again in the spring (in about mid-May) will give some control but is less effective.

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