



For immediate release:

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From: Public Information Officer Zachary Gately

Douglas-fir Tussock Moth in Plumas County

A small number of reports have come in that Douglas-fir Tussock Moth Caterpillars have been seen in Plumas County recently. Sightings have limited to near Little Grass Valley Reservoir and La Porte at this time.

The hairs on the caterpillars as well as their egg masses and cocoons may cause allergic reactions in some people. Itching is the most common complaint, but adverse health effects can include rashes (with welts or blisters), watery eyes, runny nose, cough and, less commonly, shortness of breath, wheezing, and chest tightness. Hot weather and perspiration increase the severity of symptoms, and people with a history of allergies may be more susceptible to “tussockosis.”



Douglas-fir tussock moth larvae (differences in color and size are due to stage of development).

Accidental disturbance or handling of old larval skins and spent cocoons, deposited under leaf litter, bark, wood piles, timber, or any other material that caterpillars have touched, can result in irritation. Irritation intensity depends upon the amount of contact with the caterpillar and the sensitivity of the person. The effects may be cumulative, with successive exposures resulting in elevated symptoms.

It is in your best interest to avoid contact with these caterpillars. If contact happens, here are a few tips that may offer relief:

- Remove the toxin-laden hairs from your skin. This is best done by using adhesive tape. Gently put the sticky side against your skin on the affected area and lift up, which should pull the hairs out.
- Wash the skin thoroughly with soap and water.
- Apply an ice pack to reduce swelling and pain.
- Create a paste using baking soda and water and slather it on the affected skin to reduce itching. A hydrocortisone cream also may be used.
- Take an oral antihistamine (such as Benadryl®) if the reaction to the sting worsens.

There is no need to report cases to any entity. If symptoms escalate despite these steps, such as extreme swelling or difficulty breathing, visit a healthcare provider or urgent care center to be safe.