January 28, 2021

To facilitate response by towns and/or their residents, I am in touch to provide notice of significantly detected populations of Browntail Moth (BTM). MFS conducts annual BTM surveys and in the last several years, we have seen a dramatic increase in the BTM population.

Browntail moth caterpillars have hairs that can cause a rash similar to poison ivy and respiratory distress in sensitive individuals. The hairs persist for years and can continue to cause problems when mowing or other activities stir them up.

In late-summer 2020, particularly in Waldo, Knox, Kennebec, Cumberland, and Androscoggin Counties, there was enough damage from just-hatched caterpillars that it could be mapped from the air (see attached map). This mapping and other surveys indicate that populations are very high in parts of some towns and abundant enough to cause significant discomfort in a far broader area.

The overwintering web survey is currently being conducted and results will be available in early spring. The survey is conducted from the roadside in areas that have experienced problems in the past and expands outward to define the generally affected area. None of the surveys are exhaustive; to understand BTM populations and the risk of encountering hairs at a finer scale, people need to check the trees around them. **Now is the best time to do that.**

The MFS BTM website* has more information, including:

- Description of the BTM and how to control it
- Survey resources, including what the overwintering webs look like,
- A list of Licensed Pesticide Applicators who conduct browntail moth control work—those interested in hiring contractors for management should make contacts in the winter due to high demand for services,
- Topics ranging from biology to management to State Law specific to BTM control near marine waters, are found in the frequently asked questions page.

**The MFS BTM website**

- Matt Cormier, Director
- Maine Forest Service
- 18 Elkins Lane, Harlow Building
- Phone: (207) 287-2791
- www.maineforestservice.gov
- TTY Users Call Maine Relay 711
This map shows the approximate locations of the most intense 2020 activity by Brown tail moth. These locations can be mapped to see a small map. Low populations are not mapped and some sites may overlap. The map is intended to depict areas where the moth is present in 2021. Human records of outbreaks may not have been recorded in areas with more than 100 outbreaks per month in 2020. Click here for more information.