

Oak Processionary Moth – *Thaumetopoea processionea*



Oak processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*, OPM) was first accidentally introduced to parts of South East England in 2005. European Union legislation was introduced in 2014 that recognises unaffected areas of the UK as being a 'protected zone'.

Impact

To trees: OPM caterpillars can threaten the health of several species of oak trees (*Quercus* species) because they feed on the leaves. Large populations can defoliate, or strip bare, large parts of oak trees.

To people and animals: The caterpillars have thousands of tiny hairs which contain an irritating substance called thaumetopoein. Contact with the hairs can cause itching, skin rashes and, less commonly, sore throats, breathing difficulties and eye problems.



Don't give
pests and
diseases
an easy ride



If you think you have spotted a new case of this pest in a tree, then report it through the Forestry Commission's online Tree Alert form: [forestry.gov.uk/treelert](https://www.forestry.gov.uk/treelert)

Treatment and management should only be undertaken by professionals who have the appropriate training and equipment to undertake the work safely.

You can help to slow the spread of the pest by practising good biosecurity.



Think kit

Tree surgeons and others working on or close to oaks in affected areas are strongly advised to wear protective clothing.



Think transport

Oak material from arboricultural works should not be transported out of affected areas in to other 'protected zone' areas of the UK.



Think trees

Oak trees moving from EU members states in to the UK 'protected zone' must be accompanied by a plant passport, confirming that the plants are free from OPM.

Symptoms Guide: Oak Processionary Moth

Skeletonised leaves

OPM caterpillars feed on oak leaves leaving only the skeletonised remains.



OPM nest

OPM caterpillars build white, silken nests – usually domed or tear drop shaped – on oak trunks and on the underside of branches.

Discoloured nest

As the caterpillars grow and shed their skins, the nests become discoloured.



Caterpillars procession

The caterpillars move in nose to tail processions in oak trees and on the ground – hence their common name.



OPM caterpillars

Whilst feeding, the caterpillars will often cluster together.



OPM rash

Sometimes, the first indication that there are OPM caterpillars and nests in the area, is when people start to get itchy rashes on their skin.



For more details, please visit www.forestry.gov.uk/oakprocessionarymoth