



United States Department of Agriculture



DON'T MAKE A MOVE UNTIL YOU CHECK FOR THE GYPSY MOTH

Just how stressful can moving to a new community be? Possibly “one of the most stress-producing experiences a family faces,” according to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. So stressful that once you settle into your new neighborhood, you’ll want some time to relax and decompress.

But that may be hard to do if you accidentally bring a destructive insect pest with you, and it starts stripping the leaves off the trees and shrubs around your new home. This pest, the gypsy moth, has already dramatically changed the landscape in 20 states and the District of Columbia, and it threatens many more.

Since 1970, 83 million acres in the United States have been defoliated by the gypsy moth. If left unchecked, an infestation of gypsy moth can defoliate up to 13 million acres of trees in one season. This could include your new neighborhood, if you accidentally bring this voracious pest with you.

But this doesn’t have to happen. For those of you planning a move, the message is clear: Don’t make a move until you check for the gypsy moth. While many Americans may not be familiar with the threat, residents living in the northeastern part of the United States can attest to the damage this insect can cause. As a caterpillar, it devours the leaves of many hardwood trees and shrubs, giving summer scenes a barren, wintry look. The caterpillars can be seen crawling on homes, littering lawn furniture and pools, and making outdoor activities hard to enjoy.

What may not be well known is that the public can be an active participant in preventing the spread of this invasive culprit.

“To those planning a move, don’t give this invasive pest a free ride to a noninfested area,” says Paul Chaloux, Gypsy Moth National Policy Manager for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. “The results could spell disaster for trees and shrubs in your new community.”

A few simple tips from the experts: Inspect your vehicle and outdoor household goods — lawn furniture, grills, outdoor toys, camping equipment, etc. — for gypsy moth egg masses, and remove any that are found. This can be performed easily with a putty knife, stiff brush, or similar hand tool. Simply dispose of the egg masses in a container of hot, soapy water, or place them in a plastic bag, seal it, and set it in the sun. You can see pictures of egg masses by downloading the brochure at YourMoveGypsyMothFree.com.

Another lesser-known fact: The USDA requires anyone moving or traveling from a State infested with the gypsy moth to a noninfested State to carry an official certificate of inspection of all common outdoor household articles that could carry the gypsy moth. To meet this requirement, one can perform a self-inspection of household goods or hire a state-licensed pesticide applicator. The checklist and additional information can also be found at YourMoveGypsyMothFree.com.

“The driver of the moving van is required to have this certificate on hand for the entire journey,” says David Hauenstein, vice president of Compliance Services and Government Affairs for the American Moving and Storage Association (AMSA). “This is a small step to take to prevent further destruction of this country’s majestic landscape.”

George Washington Carver once said, “Nothing is more beautiful than the loveliness of the woods before sunrise.” Make the most of your new surroundings and enjoy the view by ensuring that you’ve left the unwanted pests behind.



Hungry gypsy moth caterpillars can strip a forest bare in the summer. Photo by Tim Tigner, Virginia Department of Forestry, Bugwood.org