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APHIS Announces New Common Names for Regulated Lymantria Moths

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 14, 2022 – USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is replacing the common name for regulated Lymantria moths today. APHIS will replace “gypsy moth” (*Lymantria dispar*) with “spongy moth” and “Asian gypsy moth” (*L. dispar asiatica*, *L. dispar japonica*, *L. albescens*, *L. postalba*, and *L. umbrosa*) with “flighted spongy moth complex.”

This change aligns APHIS with the Entomological Society of America’s “Better Common Names Project” and the scientific community. Spongy moths are significant invasive forest pests. They can defoliate hundreds of species of trees and shrubs and harm our country’s natural resources.

The name “spongy moth” refers to the insect’s distinctive spongy-textured egg masses. The moth’s eggs can be moved inadvertently on outdoor items like firewood and lawn equipment. This can lead to infestations in new areas.

To prevent its spread, APHIS regulates six types of Lymantria moths. The moth with “flightless” females occurs in Europe (*L. dispar dispar*) and is under federal quarantine in northeastern U.S. states. The females of the other five Lymantria moths (*L. dispar asiatica*, *L. dispar japonica*, *L. albescens*, *L. umbrosa*, and *L. postalba*) are flighted, occur in Asia, and are not established in the United States. APHIS and its international partners inspect ships at offshore ports to prevent incursions of the moth. At U.S. ports of entry, U.S. Customs and Border Protection inspects ships and cargo to ensure they contain no life stages of the moths. APHIS also conducts surveys near ports of entry and other high-risk areas in the United States to detect any possible introductions.

To align with ESA’s initiative and ensure the effectiveness of our regulatory program, APHIS worked with its foreign partners to adopt the new common names for the Lymantria moths we jointly regulate. For more information about the spongy moth, [click here](#). Read more on the flighted spongy moth complex, [here](#).

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