

Forest Pest Bulletin



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF RESOURCE
CONSERVATION & FORESTRY

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REDHUMPED OAKWORM

CAUSAL AGENT

Symmerista canicosta

HOSTS

All oaks (*Quercus spp.*)

SYMPTOMS

The larvae of the Redhumped oakworm feed on the upper side of leaves. Leaves that have been devoured to the vein signify the presence of this pest. Branches of larger trees or entire smaller trees can be defoliated by this pest (Fig. 1).

LIFE CYCLE

There is only one generation of Redhumped oakworm per year. They overwinter as pupae in the duff, or layer of decaying leaves, on the forest floor underneath host trees. During the next summer, from June to late August, the moths of the oakworm emerge, climb into the canopy, and begin laying yellow eggs (50-300) on the underside of leaves (Fig. 2). After about 10 days, the larvae begin feeding in colonies. A full-grown larva is about 1.5 inches long with yellow, black, and white stripes that extend the length of its body. The larva has an orange head and a reddish-orange hump on its backside (Fig. 3). At the end of September, the mature larvae will spin their cocoons on the forest floor and overwinter.



Figure 1. Trees defoliated by Redhumped oakworm.

Edward Czerwinski, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, www.forestryimages.org



Figure 2. Redhumped oakworm eggs.

USDA Forest Service - Rocky Mountain Region Archives, www.forestryimages.org

MANAGEMENT

The damage caused by the Redhumped oakworm seldom leads to tree death. However, the tree may be left weak and susceptible to other damage (other insects, weather, etc.). Tree damage is usually a result of this pest combined with other pests in the area. To reduce the problems of this pest, hand-pick and discard groups of young larvae.

Due to numerous pesticide labels and/or label changes, be sure the product label includes the intended use prior to purchase or use. Please read and follow all pesticide label instructions and wear the protective equipment required. Spraying pesticides overhead increases the risk of exposure to the applicator and increases the likelihood of drift to non-target areas. Consider the use of a commercial applicator when spraying large trees due to the added risk of exposure and equipment needs. The mention of a specific product name does not constitute endorsement of that product by the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

For further information contact your nearest South Dakota Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry office. Hot Springs 605-745-5820; Lead 605-584-2300; Mitchell 605-995-8189; Pierre 605-773-3623; Rapid City 605-394-2395; Sioux Falls 605-362-2830; Watertown 605-882-5367.

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Figure 3. Redhumped oakworm larvae.

USDA Forest Service - Rocky Mountain Region Archives, USDA Forest Service