



## COMMAND PEST CONTROL

### Information sheet number 61 Brown tail moth



#### **Appearance:**

The caterpillar of the Brown Tail Moth is brown, has a dotted white line down each side and two very distinctive red dots on the back of its tail.

#### **Breeding:**

The adult moths fly in July and August, when the female lays her eggs on the food plant or tree. The caterpillars hatch in late August and early September, and immediately spin a silken tent in the tree's leaves under which they shelter. On warm sunny days the larvae will leave the tent to feed on nearby leaves. The tents are extended as feeding continues until around the end of October, when the larvae hibernate. They resume feeding in April/May, in June they pupate, and in July the adult moths emerge.

#### **Food:**

It is a voracious eater of vegetation, especially in the spring, and although it prefers hawthorn, blackthorn, buckthorn, oak, willow and blackberry, it will eat practically any type of tree or bush.

#### **Where do Brown tail moths live?**

You might see the 'tents' in which the caterpillars shelter in cold weather. These are formed out of fine whitish silk and may incorporate a number of leaves. A single tent can contain hundreds of caterpillars. The tent might also be surrounded by an area of dead leaves.

#### **Damage:**

Although some damage is caused to the trees, it is the extremely irritating nature of the larval hairs which cause far more of a problem to the public. These hairs are not poisonous, but may cause a strong allergic reaction to the skin, usually after repeated contact. The problem is more serious if hairs get into the eyes. The best time to treat is in the winter when there is no foliage. Larvae overwinter in tents and then treatment can be by spraying, pruning or burning affected bushes / shrubs/ trees.

**For more advice and control recommendations contact us on 01787 248049**