

GUIDELINES - The “Oak Processionary Moth”

Information on the Oak Processionary Moth

It was warned that there will be more Oak Processionary Moths this year due to the mild winter. These moths live in all types of oak trees: forest oak, durmast oak as well as the red oak. The Oak Processionary Moth lives mainly in sparse oak forests, remains, and single trees in dry and warm regions. Camping site owners who have oak trees on their area might want to check if there are Oak Processionary Moths.

What happens if you come into contact with the Oak Processory Moth?

The moth itself is harmless. However, their small hairs are toxic (thaumetopoein) and therefore pose a health risk for both humans and other animals. These can be transported by the wind much further than just the immediate surroundings of the forest. Coming into contact with the hair, molting remains or the nest can lead to allergic reactions and skin inflammation.

Measures

- Find out if there are oak trees on your camping site or in the region and if there are Oak Processory Moths. You can identify the caterpillar of the moth by its long hair and the fact that they travel in large groups of more than 100 moths. This is also where the moth gets its name. When the caterpillars pupate, they gather in nests in a tree. It is also possible find information about Oak Processory Moths at local authorities or forestry offices in your region. If there are nests, they have to be reported to a local health authority or horticulture authority.
- Attention: Do not touch the moths, especially their toxic hair.
- If possible, close off areas that have been affected by Oak Processory Moths to prevent people from coming into contact with them and their toxic hair.
- Inform your guests!

There are certain measures which should be taken if humans or animals come into contact with the Oak Processory Moth despite precautions. The „Europäische Stiftung für Allergieforschung“ (ECARF The European Association for Allergic Reaction) proposes the following immediate life saving measures:

- Change your clothes and wipe your shoes with a wet cloth
- Remove all visual moth hair with the help of sticky tape
- Wash clothes at a temperature over 60 degrees
- Take a bath, wash your hair and eyes
- Wash, vacuum clean and wipe affected objects such as your car
- Bathe your dog

- If you have any skin reactions, consult a doctor.
- If you experience respiratory distress, call the emergency number.

Moreover, contact can be prevented by taking the following measures:

- Mind the areas where the Oak Processory Moth has been sighted
- Do not touch the moths
- Cover face, arms, legs and other sensitive skin

It is advisable to pass this information to your guests.

Control

To control the Oak Processory Moth, please contact an expert, as the procedure poses health risks and a special technique has to be used. Trained staff have the right equipment to ensure that the moths are removed safely. Using insecticides has to be thoroughly weighed against nature and water conservation. Experts or trained staff (also trained camping site staff) have the means to professionally remove and dispose of the nests with the appropriate equipment (safety overalls, hand, face, and respiratory protection).

Field study

Dr. Gunter Riechey, president of the BVCD e.V. as well as owner of a camping site, recommends the following:

Dr. Riechey had his staff trained by experts so that they would be able to securely and properly remove the moths. Moreover, he bought overalls, hand, face, and respiratory protection. As the owner of the campsite, he checked to see if the area contained nests or if a procession of Oak Processionary Moths had already begun. Generally, all measures should be discussed with the local and regulatory authorities. Dr. Riechey had the nests of the moths sprayed. This spray glued the toxic hair of the small animals so that they could not easily spread. Hairspray has the same effect, according to Dr. Gunter Riechey. After these measure had been taken, trained staff removed the moths and their nests with a special vacuum cleaner. The vacuum cleaner bag was burned outside the camping site area. Be aware: the burning of the bag should take place at a fair distance from the camping site, as the toxic hairs might disperse anyhow.

Follow these guidelines for a good start in the new summer season.