

# Browntail Moths in Falmouth

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**Town Role and Future Options**

# History of Moths in Falmouth

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- 2002
  - Aerial spraying and environmental impact
- 2017
  - Town notification
  - Town response





## Town of Falmouth, Maine

June 15, 2017

Re: Browntail Moths

Dear Resident,

During the past week, the town has received numerous complaints about the presence of Browntail moths on private properties located on Foreside Road and its vicinity. The Town was aware that there could be an infestation this year, however, the level of infestation was predicted to be moderate or similar to recent years. Although Falmouth has experienced Browntail Moth infestations in the past, it has not seen any widespread activity for 15 years. The town takes these complaints seriously and is working hard to find solutions to the problem.

Advanced preparation is difficult when it is widespread. In 2002, the Town conducted aerial spraying, which met with much resistance. This is the reason the Town has not sprayed since that time. Another application, which has been deployed in towns to our north is to spray from the road side but the intended impact is to save street trees rather than eradication of the Browntail Moth. The Town chose not to consider this approach this year because the predicted infestation was not considered to be severe. Even if the town deployed this application, there would have been an infestation on private property. We will re-assess our options for next year once we develop a better inventory of nests or webs later this fall.

Browntail caterpillars typically feed and build webs on oak and apple trees. If webs are not treated before May, toxic hairs develop on the caterpillars and are spread by wind, mowing, leaf blowing, etc. Individuals with sensitivity can develop a skin rash similar to poison ivy and experience respiratory problems (caused by a chemical reaction to the hair toxins as well as the physical irritation from the barbed hairs). Because it is too late to treat the caterpillars this year, residents should take precautions to limit their exposure to the problem. It is too late to treat because the caterpillars are already shedding their hairs. A brochure from the Maine Forest Service is enclosed with this letter. The brochure provides detailed information about avoidance and includes photos of the Browntail caterpillar and web. The brochure also explains that the peak period for exposure will be from May to July.

In November, the town will conduct an inventory of all Browntail webs on public property (parks, trails, right of way). We also hope that private homeowners will provide us with an inventory of their properties. Throughout the winter of 2017/2018, town officials will assess the information and determine a plan for possible treatment in the spring of 2018. There will be an opportunity for public input during this process. Treatment could include aerial or street spraying of the affected areas.

For more information about Browntail moths, please contact the Maine Forest Service at (207) 287-2431. For Browntail moth treatment options, please contact the Maine Board of Pesticides Control at (207)-287-2731. If you have questions about this letter or the Town of Falmouth's response to this situation, please call (207) 699-5335.

Sincerely,



# Options moving forward

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- Foliar spraying (aerial and ground)
- Basal (bark) spraying
- Trunk injections
- Pruning and tree removal
- Nest harvest
- Inventory – partnership with private property owners
- Education – (tree treatment, how to live with BTM, medical treatment)
- Warnings/alerts

# Public comment

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# Recap, next steps, and how to stay informed

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