

TENT CATERpillARS—LACKEY MOTH (*Malacosoma neustria*)



Caterpillars in a tent



Caterpillar of Lackey Moth



Egg mass of tent caterpillar

TENT CATERPILLARS

Description

Tent caterpillars are frequently reported causing localised severe defoliation of trees, including fruits and nuts.

Not all types of tent forming caterpillars found in Afghanistan are necessarily the same but the Lackey Moth, *Malacosoma neustria*, has been identified and is common in Europe and Asia.

The Lackey Moth occurs from July to September and lays eggs in a band round a twig of a host plant. The eggs hatch in April and feed in a group covered by a tent. They then pupate in June and in a cocoon between leaves or cracks in the bark.

Other types of tent caterpillar leave the tent to feed in morning or evening. Thus spraying surrounding foliage with an ingested pesticide is a good method of control.

Monitoring

Search for egg masses in late winter before the caterpillars hatch. Search for early tents.

Control

Remove eggs or tents by hand with gloves as they can be toxic. Choose a time of day when the caterpillars are at home in the tent. The best method if there are not too many.

Spray with Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) - not just the tent but on leaves outside where caterpillars are feeding.

Spray Cypermethrin with added wetter or washing-up liquid to penetrate tent. This will also harm natural predators but is probably the cheapest and simplest remedy. Do not use during blossom or when flowering weeds or an intercrop are present as this will kill bees.