



29th June 2023

Circular 09/2023

Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*)

To whom it may concern

I refer to a recent confirmed finding of the Protected Zone pest Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) commonly called OPM, on June 12th in a group of four oak trees planted in a housing estate in Dublin. The OPM nests and host trees were removed and destroyed immediately by the Department. A demarcated area has been established and intensive surveillance is being carried out in the area.

This is only the second finding of this pest on the island of Ireland, following the first finding in July 2020. Further information can be found here: [OPM Factsheet](#) In addition by way of update on the situation, the Department is hosting a webinar on Tuesday 4th July. Details are in the cover email to this notice.

In terms of pathways for the movement of OPM from place to place, oak plants that are greater than 8cm girth at 1.2m height which might typically be planted for landscaping or amenity purposes are more susceptible to OPM infestation and more difficult to inspect than smaller plants. Oak plants of this size are recognised as being of higher risk of spreading the pest than smaller plants and this is reflected in the plant passporting requirements set out in the Plant Health Regulation which sets-out additional requirements for oak plants of this size.

Oak plants for forestry tend to be less than 1m in height and are regarded as much lower risk of spread of OPM than larger plants. Nonetheless at this time, it is important that all possible pathways of introduction are pursued.

You may already be aware that Ireland has notification requirements in place for the movement into Ireland of certain high-risk plants and plant products including oak plants. Importers must notify the Department in writing of any deliveries from other Member States of such plants no later than 48 hours after arrival into the State.

The Department is now carrying out traceability on oak imported tree consignments which were moved within or imported into Ireland during the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 planting seasons. In carrying out this traceability we require your assistance and request that you provide

- Invoices/delivery notes and plant passport information for any oak trees you imported from outside Ireland during the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 planting seasons.
- information as to where and/or to whom these imported plants were sold to facilitate trace forward.

The above information can be sent to forestprotection@agriculture.gov.ie. Your response by 5pm on Friday 8th July would be appreciated. We would like to thank you for your cooperation in this matter to deal with the finding and to aid maintain Ireland's Protected Zone for this pest.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact the Forest Health Section of the Forestry Inspectorate at: forestprotection@agriculture.gov.ie.

Yours sincerely
Joanne Adams
Assistant Principal Officer
Forestry Division



Notes

- Ireland is recognised as a protected zone under EU legislation for this pest based on years of official survey data and we are the last EU Member State to be free from OPM.
- A Protected Zone is an area of the EU which is free from a quarantine organism despite favourable conditions for them to establish themselves.
- Oak trees are the main host for this pest, and it is unlikely to be found on any tree other than oak.
- OPM defoliates and weakens oak trees and importantly can be a hazard to human and animal health through direct contact with the hairs of the caterpillars, which can provoke allergic reactions.
- Health problems can occur even if the larvae are not handled as the hairs break off readily and are dispersed in air currents.
- Abandoned nests contain shed skins, pupal cases and vast numbers of detached hairs and should be treated with extreme caution.