

Poplar sawfly



Larva of the Poplar Sawfly was detected in the suburb of Abbotsford, Dunedin, in January 2019.

Biosecurity New Zealand has determined there is an established sawfly population in the area where the larva was detected.

What does it look like?

Poplar sawfly larvae are up to 16mm long. They are overall yellow with two lateral rows of black spots and whitish hairs, heads are blackish and brownish, except some yellow spots on the frontal part.

Adult poplar sawflies are less likely to be recognisable to the public as they are small and fly in the air. They are 6-9mm long and their colouring is reddish yellow and their heads and part of thorax are black. Their wings are yellowish and glassy, and veins on wings are a reddish yellow.



Where is it found?

The poplar sawfly (*Cladius grandis*), is commonly found in Europe, Asia and North America. However, in some areas its distribution is patchy and localised.

Affected plants

The poplar sawfly feeds mainly on poplar trees, and sometimes on willows and alder.

Impact

If the sawfly behaves here like it does overseas, its impact is likely to be very low. Damage to trees can usually only be seen on leaves.

During their development, eggs increase considerably in volume inside the leaf pockets where they have been laid. They can be identified as bulbous swellings.

The larvae can cause some defoliation on trees. If repeated for several years it could lead to dieback of some branches. Defoliation late in the growing season is thought to have little impact on the trees. Therefore, the impact on the trees is considered low with the canopy looking almost intact from a distance.



To report a pest or disease

Call Biosecurity New Zealand's Exotic Pest and Disease hotline: 0800 80 99 66
www.biosecurity.govt.nz

Biology

The species may have up to two generations per year – the first from late spring to late summer and second from late summer to mid-autumn.

Eggs are laid in the leaf stalk. Depending on the temperature they develop in about 17 to 40 days.

Larvae pass through 6-7 development stages that may take up to 34 days (average 16.5 days for males and 21.5 days for females). During the first three stages they live mostly solitary, feeding on the fresh leaf epidermis (outer layer). From the fourth stage they move to the tip of the leaf and aggregate in groups. Larvae feed extensively on leaves and in general, bottom tier foliage is more affected than top tier. They move backwards and normally stop feeding just before reaching the base of the leaf.



A few days after the last moult, larvae stop feeding and move down the tree trunk seeking for dark shelter place to pupate. They spin cocoons in the upper soil layer, crevices of the bark or debris of all kinds.

Contact

Biosecurity New Zealand would like to hear from anybody who thinks they might have seen a poplar sawfly.

If you live outside of Dunedin and Mosgiel and you believe you have seen a poplar sawfly larva, take a photo and call Biosecurity New Zealand's Exotic Pest and Disease on 0800 80 99 66