

Kevin Pike, town board member, sent this reply to a resident concerning the spongy moth infestation.

It's a particularly bad year for spongy moths, the worst one since we've lived here. Nearly all the oaks on our farm have been hit and have been completely defoliated. The infestations, however, are cyclical at around 10-15 years. Some years are mild, some are horrible. This has been a horrible year.

I've included links below to the NY DEC fact sheets and information on the moth. It's too late to do anything now. We will spray oil in October and will also put bacillus down on the ground around the trees. This gets taken up in the roots system by the tree and will be present in the leaves. As the caterpillars eat the leaves, they become paralyzed and die of starvation.

Unfortunately for the resident, most sprays are ineffective—especially when not applied at the right time of year. Tree bands can also work to prevent the caterpillars from climbing up into the trees, but if the moths lay their eggs in the trees themselves, the bands won't be effective, because the eggs are already in the tree.

[Spongy Moth Factsheet \(ny.gov\)](#)

[Spongy Moth - NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation](#)

The trees defoliated now should leaf out again in July, but the leaves will be smaller, and the hope is that the tree can photosynthesize enough to make until next year. But, if this happens to the same tree several years in a row, the tree will die.

Unfortunately, NY DEC does not manage spongy moths or provide funding to do so.

Sorry for the mostly bad news. What we need are more acorns and more small mammals. When we have a lack of acorns, the mammal population decreases, and the mammals are the only predators of the spongy moth caterpillar (birds won't eat them).