

NORTHERN PITCH TWIG MOTH

Petrova albicapitana (Bsk.)

DISTRIBUTION

Interior regions of the province following the range of the host species.



Figure 129. Northern pitch twig moth larvae feed singly within a nodule.

TREE SPECIES ATTACKED:

Young lodgepole pine, generally 0.3 to 3 m tall.

INSECT DESCRIPTION & DAMAGE SYMPTOMS:

The mature larvae are about 1.7 cm long. The colour of the body varies from yellow to orange-brown. The head is reddish-brown. Characteristic pitch nodules occur near terminal buds, the crotch of branch junctions, or at the crotch of the main stem and branches. These nodules consist of pitch and frass and conceal a single feeding larva in a silk-lined inner chamber. The nodules produced at branch or stem crotches are usually 2.0 cm or more in diameter and are formed by older larvae. Those occurring at terminal buds are usually less than 1 cm in diameter and are produced by newly emerged larvae. The adult moth is a mottled light brown and silver.

DAMAGE:

Feeding larvae can kill the tips of branches or terminal shoots by girdling the inner bark. Occasionally, the nodules on the main stem become large enough to kill the top of a tree. More typically, however, the damaged area is weakened and



Figure 130. Girdling by northern pitch twig moth larva.

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therefore subject to wind or snow breakage. In addition, larval feeding may reduce timber quality by inducing crooked leaders. Plantations are more heavily attacked than densely stocked, naturally regenerated stands. This insect rarely attacks suppressed trees.

SIMILAR DAMAGE:

On trees over 2 m in height, the sequoia pitch moth can cause similar damage where the two pitch moths overlap in distribution. The mature sequoia pitch moth larvae is larger and lighter in colour than the northern pitch twig moth larvae, and the sequoia pitch moth pitch mass tends to be larger and messier. The gouty pitch midge can cause similar deformities, but will not have the pitch mass associated with the pitch twig moth.



Figure 131. Breakage and deformity caused by northern pitch twig moth attack.



Figure 132. Northern pitch twig moth feeding often occurs near branch junctions. Trees are subsequently deformed and weakened.