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Pear Sawfly

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PEAR SAWFLY

The pear sawfly, *Caliroa cerasei* L., is a common pest on pear, cherry, and hawthorn in Utah. The slug-like appearance of the larval stage has prompted this insect to also be referred to as the pear or cherry slug in various parts of the country. Although cherry and pear are the preferred hosts, the pear sawfly will also attack plum, buttonbrush, Juneberry, mountain ash, and quince. On fruit trees which are treated for other pests, the pear sawfly is rarely a problem, but in untreated situations, the entire tree may be defoliated.

The primary damage is caused by feeding of the larval stage. The larvae feed on the leaf epidermis between leaf veins and can completely skeletonize the leaves. When high populations are present, virtually every leaf on the tree may appear to be dead because of larval feeding.

There are two generations of pear sawfly per year in Utah. The first generation appears in May when the adults emerge from cocoons found in the soil. Adults have four wings, are black-and-yellow and slightly larger than a common housefly. The adults insert their eggs under the epidermis of a leaf where the eggs hatch 1-2 weeks later. The early instar larvae are grey-green, lack distinct legs and are wide at the front end of the body. The larvae secrets a slime which completely covers the earlier instars, resulting in the slug-like appearance. The last instar larvae transforms to become a green- orange caterpillar-like larvae which possess distinct legs. The last instar larvae then pupate and adults emerge August through September. This second generation is generally the more damaging stage because of the higher populations which commonly occur.

As mentioned previously, the pear sawfly is rarely a problem if any pesticides are used for control of other insects. In certain circumstances; however, the pear sawfly can reach damaging population levels. Because the larvae are extremely susceptible to dessication, several references indicate that road dust or dirt thrown on the tree is enough to control this insect. Proper timing is when larvae are visible for either generation. If pesticides are used, the homeowner should use Diazinon, Malathion, or Sevin.

Precautionary Statement

All pesticides have both benefits and risks. Benefits can be maximized and risks minimized by reading and following the labeling. Pay close attention to the directions for use and the precautionary statements. The information on pesticide labels contains both instructions and limitations. Pesticide labels are legal documents, and it is a violation of both federal and state laws to use a pesticide inconsistent with its labeling. The pesticide applicator is legally responsible for proper use. Always read and follow the label.

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