



Status of Invasive Forest and Landscape Pests in Minnesota

2025 Annual Report

February 2026

Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Pest Detection and Export Certification Unit

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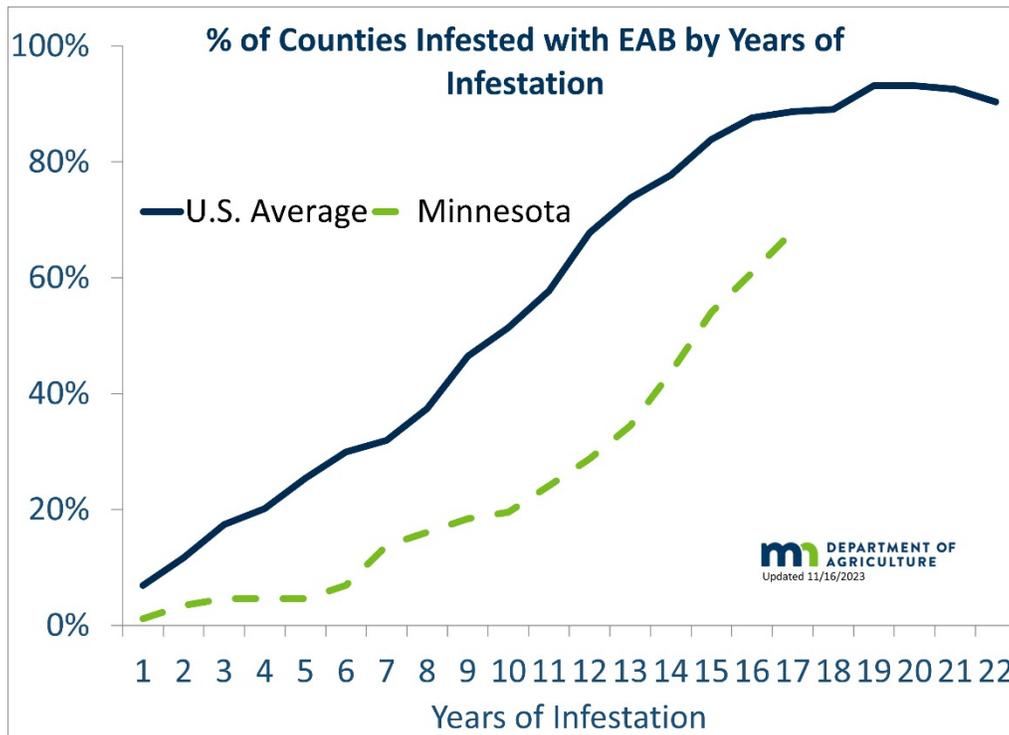
Contents

- Emerald Ash Borer (*Agrilus planipennis*) 4
 - Survey 4
 - Biological Control..... 5
- Nursery and Christmas Tree Farm Survey 6
 - Insect Survey..... 7
 - Disease Survey 9
 - Water and Soil Sampling for Phytophthoras 10
- Outreach 11
- Collaborative Research..... 13
 - Emerald Ash Borer Biocontrol 13
 - Red Star Rust 14
 - Elongate Hemlock Scale Cold Tolerance 15
 - Spotted Lanternfly Cold Tolerance 15
- Spongy Moth (*Lymantria dispar*) 16
 - Trapping Survey 17
 - Alternate Life Stage (ALS) Surveys..... 19
 - Management 20
- For More Information..... 20

Emerald Ash Borer (*Agrilus planipennis*)

Emerald ash borer (EAB) (*Agrilus planipennis*) was discovered in six new counties - Aitkin, Itasca, Meeker, Murray, Otter Tail, and Wadena. Overall, the rate of spread in Minnesota is currently about 20% slower than the national average (Figure 1).

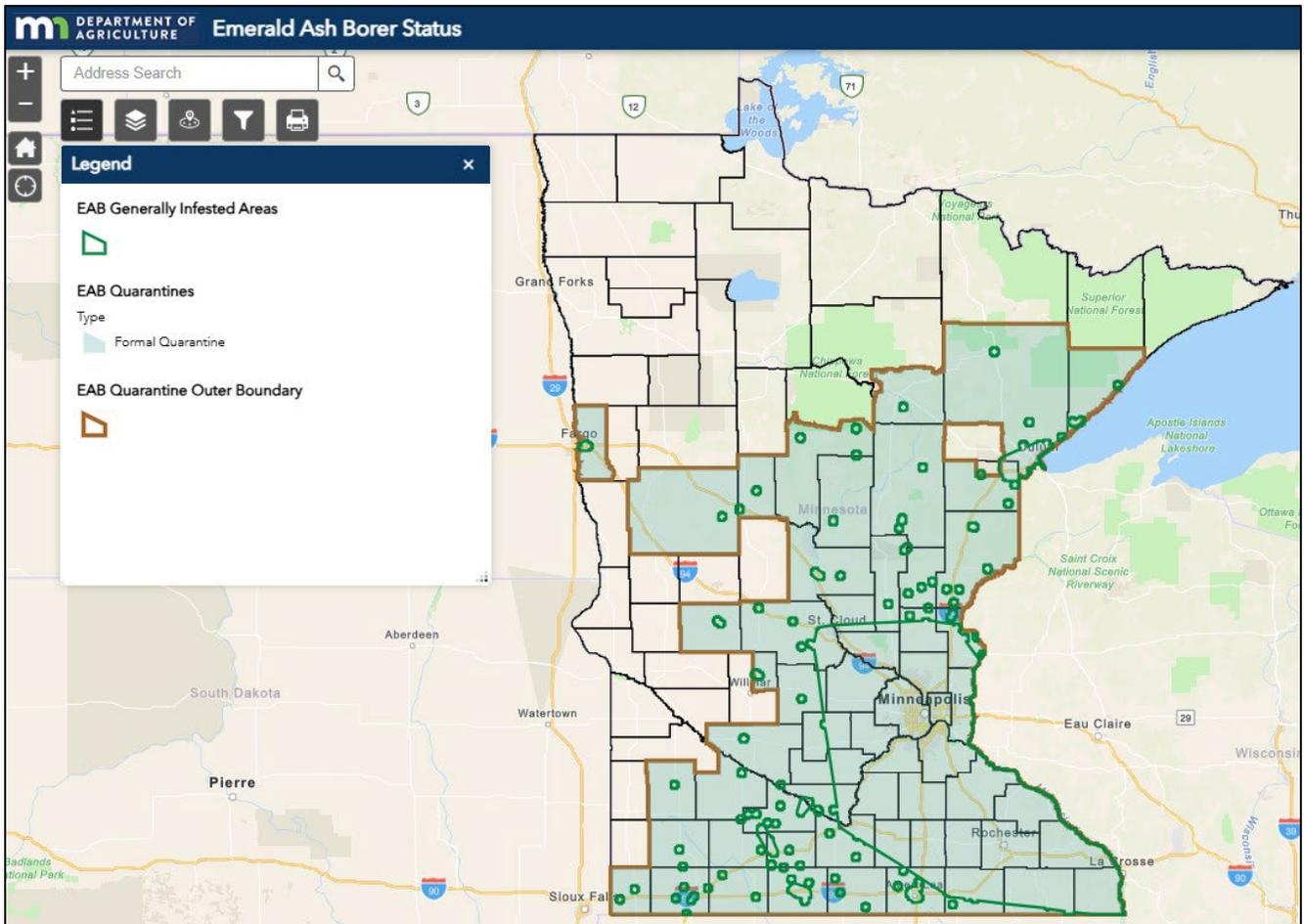
Figure 1. Rate of emerald ash borer spread to new counties in Minnesota compared with the United States.



Survey

Through follow-up on reports from citizens and natural resource professionals submitted to Report a Pest, EAB infestations were discovered in 21 new communities within regulated areas, as well as in six new counties (Figure 2). All known EAB-infested areas can be viewed on the [MDA EAB Status Map](#).

Figure 2. EAB-infested counties in Minnesota as of December 31, 2025.



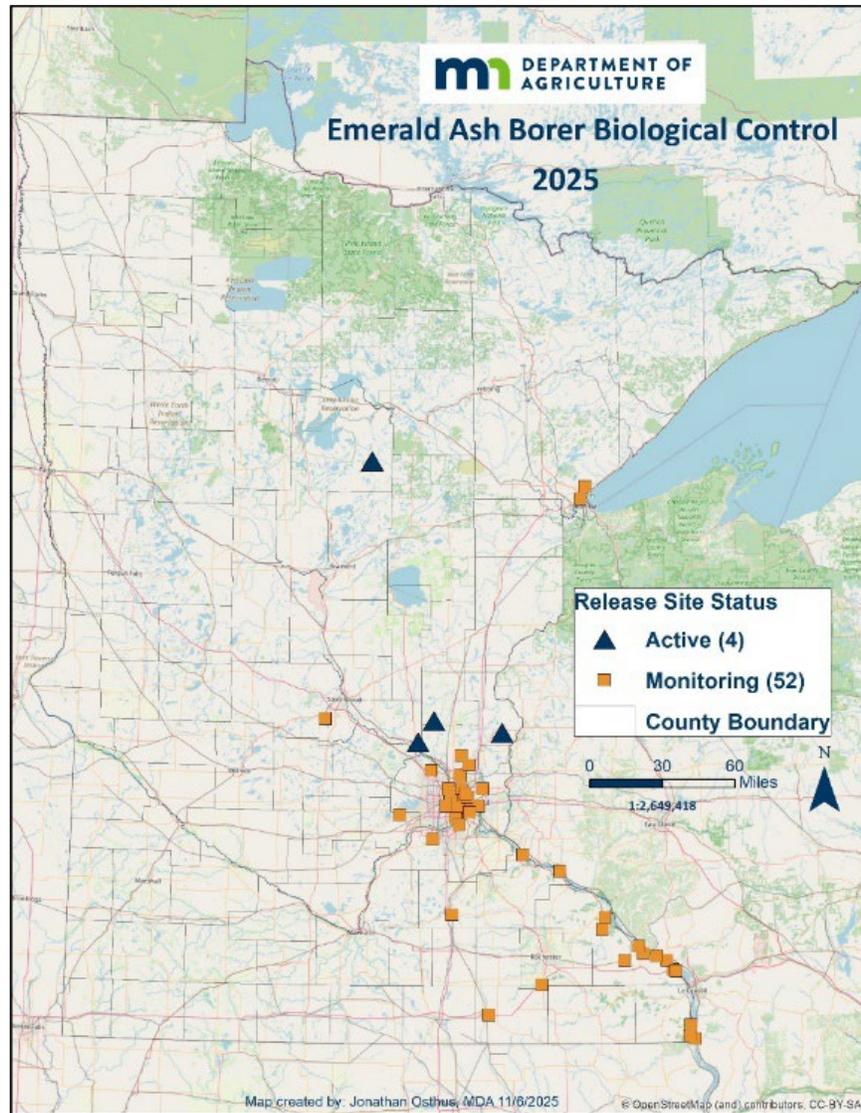
Biological Control

With support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) EAB Parasitoid Rearing Facility in Brighton, Michigan, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) released 19,058 parasitoid wasps at four sites: Elk River, Lindstrom, Isanti, the Chippewa National Forest near Remer (Figure 3). Two of these sites will receive additional parasitoids in summer 2026. Since this project began in 2010, over 700,000 wasps have been released at 56 EAB-infested sites across 19 counties and tribal lands in Minnesota.

Two parasitoid species, *Oobius agrili* and *Tetrastichus planipennis*, have been in use since 2010. A third species, *Spathius galinae*, was introduced in 2016.

The USDA rearing facility is accepting applications for about 100 new sites in 2026 for first-year releases, with priority given to states and counties that have not previously participated. The MDA has applied for three new release sites.

Figure 3. Map of EAB biocontrol sites that received wasp releases in 2025.



Nursery and Christmas Tree Farm Survey

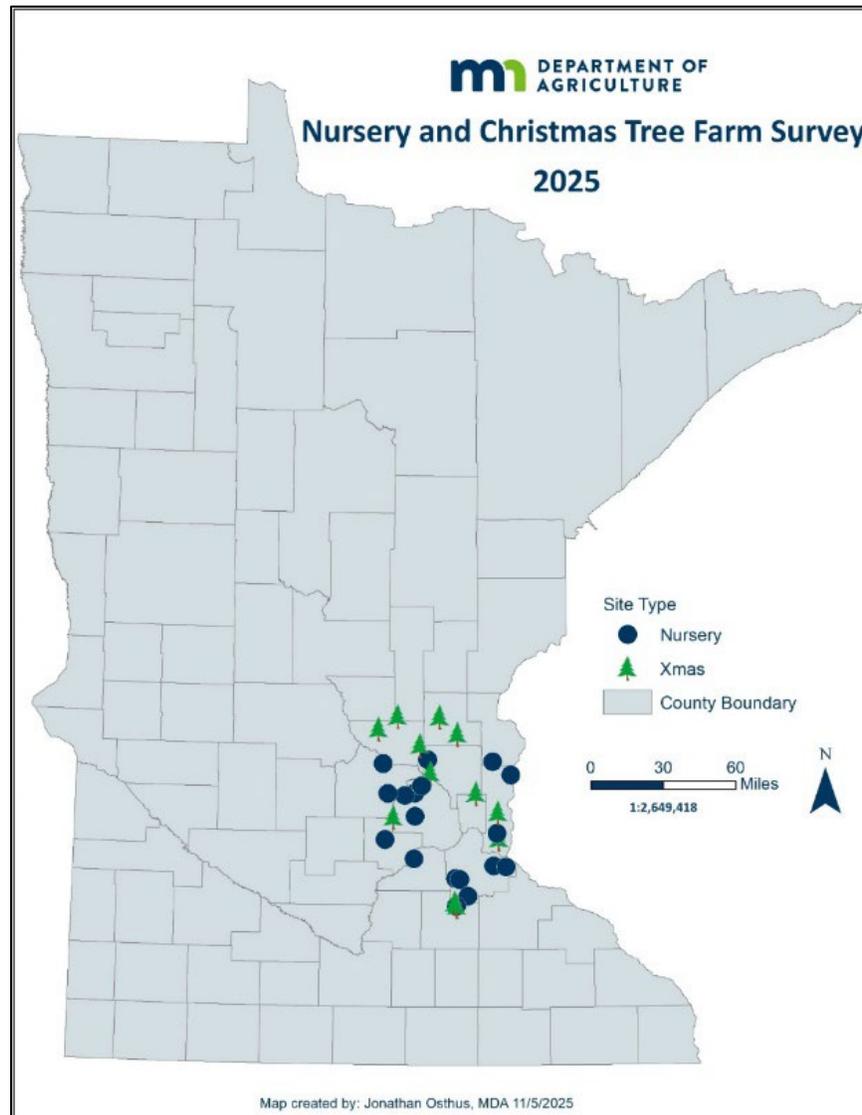
The introduction of pests through the nursery industry and Christmas tree farms is a threat to urban forests, natural ecosystems, and agricultural crops in the United States. In recent years, multiple invasive species have been intercepted in Minnesota and neighboring states through these pathways.

Past introductions of plant pests, such as elongate hemlock scale and *Ralstonia*, have led to trace forward events, delimiting surveys, regulatory actions (including stop sale orders), and collect and destroy events. These incidents demonstrate the need for continued comprehensive surveys, along with a robust nursery program, to monitor invasive insects and pathogens in the nursery industry and Christmas tree farms in Minnesota.

This was the fourth year of surveys funded by the Plant Protection Act 7721. There were 20 insects, and 12 plant pathogens of concern included in the surveys (Tables 1 and 2). Targets were chosen based on their potential to cause significant damage to Minnesota's crops and native plant communities.

Survey staff conducted inspections at 18 nurseries and 13 Christmas tree farms across 12 counties (Figure 4). Four nurseries were in rusty patched bumble bee (RPBB) habitat zones and followed modified survey protocols. White wing traps for rosy moth (*Lymantria mathura*), plum fruit moth (*Grapholita funebrana*), and oak processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) were not used at these nursery sites since there is no approved alternative survey method.

Figure 4. Nursery and Christmas tree farm survey site locations.



Insect Survey

Trapping and visual insect surveys began in mid-May. A total of 111 traps were set. Traps were placed in different areas of the sites to avoid any intermingling of pheromones that might inhibit insect attraction to the traps. Each trap was checked biweekly by survey staff, and baits were changed as needed. Visual surveys for insect pests were also conducted biweekly until host material was no longer available. All trap samples were negative.

Table 1. Plant insect pests.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Survey Site Type	Survey Method
Asian longhorned beetle	<i>Anoplophora glabripennis</i>	Nursery	Visual
Box tree moth	<i>Cydalima perspectalis</i>	Nursery	Visual
Boxwood leaf miner	<i>Monarthropalpus flavus</i>	Nursery	Visual
Japanese wax scale	<i>Ceroplastes japonicus</i>	Nursery	Visual
Rosy moth	<i>Lymantria mathura</i>	Nursery	Trap
Spotted lanternfly	<i>Lycorma delicatula</i>	Nursery	Visual
Summer fruit tortrix	<i>Adoxophyes orana</i>	Nursery	Trap
Balsam woolly adelgid	<i>Adelges piceae</i>	Christmas Tree	Visual
Elm zigzag sawfly	<i>Aproceros leucopoda</i>	Nursery	Visual
Elongate hemlock scale	<i>Fiorinia externa</i>	Christmas Tree	Visual
European spruce bark beetle	<i>Ips typographus</i>	Christmas Tree	Trap
Hemlock woolly adelgid	<i>Adelges tsugae</i>	Christmas Tree	Visual
Oak processionary moth	<i>Thaumetopoea processionea</i>	Nursery	Trap
Pine processionary moth	<i>Thaumetopoea pityocampa</i>	Christmas Tree	Trap
Pine sawfly	<i>Diprion pini</i>	Christmas Tree	Trap
Six-toothed ips	<i>Ips sexdentatus</i>	Christmas Tree	Trap
Spongy moth	<i>Lymantria dispar</i>	Christmas Tree	Visual
Plum fruit moth	<i>Grapholita funebrana</i>	Nursery	Trap
Large pine weevil	<i>Hylobius abietis</i>	Christmas Tree	Trap
Black fir sawyer	<i>Monochamus urussovii</i>	Christmas Tree	Trap

Disease Survey

In 2025, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) conducted a visual survey for emerging and invasive diseases. A minimum of 10 host plants were monitored biweekly for symptoms of target diseases. All suspect materials were collected and sent to the MDA lab for analysis.

In addition to visual surveys, water and soil samples were collected to test for invasive species of *Phytophthora*. Leaf samples from *Prunus* species were also collected to test for plum pox virus.

Table 2. Plant disease pests.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Survey Site
Almond witches' broom	<i>Candidatus Phytoplasma phoenicium</i> 16SrIX-B	Nursery
Apple proliferation phytoplasma	<i>Candidatus Phytoplasma mali</i> 16SrX-A	Nursery
Bacterial wilt; Southern bacterial wilt	<i>Ralstonia solanacearum</i> race 3 biovar 2	Nursery
Boxwood blight	<i>Calonectria pseudonaviculata</i>	Nursery
European stone fruit yellows	<i>Candidatus Phytoplasma prunorum</i> 16SrX-F	Nursery
Scots pine blister rust	<i>Cronartium flaccidum</i>	Christmas tree farm
Beech bleeding canker	<i>Phytophthora kernoviae</i>	Nursery
Elm yellows	<i>Candidatus Phytoplasma ulmi</i>	Nursery
Jujube witches' broom	<i>Candidatus Phytoplasma ziziphi</i>	Nursery
Plum pox	plum pox virus	Nursery
Red Star Rust	<i>Gymnosporangium yamadae</i>	Nursery
Sudden oak death	<i>Phytophthora ramorum</i>	Nursery

Red Star Rust

Red star rust, caused by the fungus *Gymnosporangium yamadae*, is native to Japan, China, and Korea. This disease was first identified in the U.S. in 2009 in several northeastern states and was first reported in Wisconsin in 2021 and Minnesota in 2022.

The red star rust fungus infects apple, crabapple, and juniper at different stages of its life cycle. The most common symptoms on apples and crabapples are bright red, orange, or yellow leaf spots. Some susceptible apple varieties may drop infected leaves, resulting in yield loss. On juniper twigs, the fungus produces small (less than 0.4 inches in diameter) woody galls. In wet spring weather, these galls produce a bright orange gelatinous mass full of fungal spores. Spores produced on infected junipers are carried by wind and rain to infect apple and

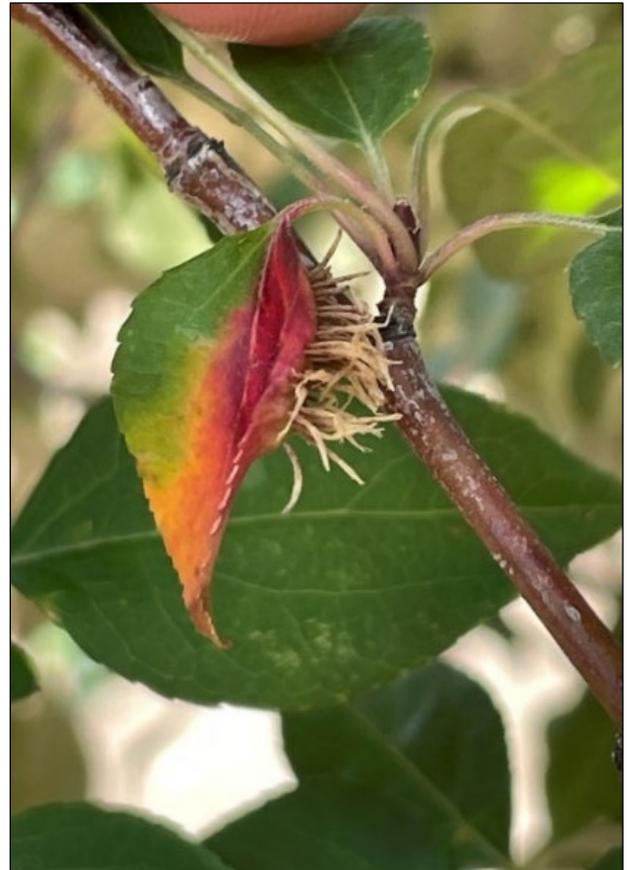
crabapple leaves in spring. In fall, chestnut brown powdery spores produced on infected apples and crabapple leaves are carried by wind to infect nearby junipers.

In 2025, the MDA identified red star rust in Carver, Dakota, Goodhue, Scott and Washington counties. Infected apple trees were present in commercial apple orchards and nurseries. The detection in Goodhue County was the first report for that county.

Figure 5. Red and orange leaf spots caused by red star rust on a Zestar apple leaf.



Figure 6. Bright red leaf spot with long finger-like spore producing structures emerging from the lower leaf surface on a crabapple tree infected with red star rust.



Water and Soil Sampling for Phytophthoras

In 2025, the MDA collected soil and water samples from most nursery survey sites to look for invasive species of *Phytophthora*. *Phytophthora* can cause root rot, crown rot, and die back in many plants. Infected plants often wilt and die or become so severely damaged that they are unsellable.

The USDA has identified two invasive priority species: *Phytophthora ramorum* and *Phytophthora kernoviae*. *Phytophthoras* are water molds, fungus-like organisms that survive and spread through infected soil and water. By testing water in puddles, runoff areas, irrigation ponds, and soil near water sources and diseased or dead plants, the MDA can test large production areas for the presence of invasive *Phyophthoras*.

In collaboration with Dr. Bob Blanchette and Nick Rajtar of the University of Minnesota Department of Plant Pathology, an inventory of native and introduced *Phytophthora* species was created from soil samples.

Soil and water samples were collected in spring and fall from nurseries, and soil samples were collected from Christmas tree farms during the same periods (Table 3).

Neither of the USDA priority invasive *Phytophthora* species (*P. ramorum* or *P. kernoviae*) were found in Minnesota water samples. The most common species of *Phytophthora* identified from 2025 soil samples were *Phytophthora inundata* and *Phytophthora lacustris*, both of which can cause root rot under wet conditions.

Figure 7. Collecting soil and water samples.



Table 3. Number of water and soil samples collected.

	Spring	Fall	Counties
Water Samples from Nurseries	17	17	10
Soil Samples from Nurseries	19	19	9
Soil Samples from Christmas Tree Farms	12	12	7

Outreach

The Report a Pest system allows people to report pests using an online form, by phone, email, or via EDDMaps (www.eddmaps.org). This citizen participation tool supports awareness and improves early detection efforts.

This was a slow summer for reporting invasive species with over 400 reports submitted through all the reporting methods mentioned. As more invasive pests become common in metro areas, residents often contact their municipality for more information, which has reduced reports to the MDA.

The Report a Pest online form was updated to include new species and to prompt users to input an address, picture, and contact information. These updates reduced the number of email correspondences needed to correctly identify invasive species. It has also streamlined the tracking process by automatically assigning reports to the appropriate MDA staff based on the reporter’s selection of species or question. The benefits from this

activity include the development of a broader audience awareness of invasive pests and better early detection of quarantine pests.

The Plant Pest Insider (PPI) newsletter is an outreach tool we utilize to educate Minnesota residents and industry professionals on invasive pests and how to report them. The MDA sends out the PPI newsletter monthly. Sign up to receive emails at [Plant Pest Insider Newsletter | Minnesota Department of Agriculture](#).

The MDA also produces the *Smarty Plants* podcast as an outreach tool with the goal of highlighting the responsibilities and activities of the Plant Protection Division. Through engaging discussions with subject matter experts, researchers, and agency leaders, the podcast explores a range of topics including noxious weed regulation, pest management, emerging plant diseases. Listen online at [Smarty Plants](#).

Figure 8. The *Smarty Plants* podcast was highlighted at the MDA's State Fair exhibit.



The MDA and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources hosted two *Ask the Bug Nerds* live sessions at the Minnesota State Fair. The MDA used large signs created last year that feature pictures of common and invasive insect pests to help attendees identify what they are finding in their yards, gardens, and homes. These signs were also used during environmental education days for elementary and middle school students in May and September. More than 600 students participated in environmental education days to learn about the risks of moving firewood and about emerald ash borer.

Information about elongate hemlock scale and other invasive pests associated with Christmas trees and holiday greenery will be provided to both the nursery industry and the public. Additional information will be shared in press releases about proper holiday greenery disposal. The MDA is advertising ahead of the holiday season with a short video that teaches people what signs of invasive pests to look for when purchasing greenery. After the holidays, a holiday greenery disposal advertisement will run.

The MDA worked with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to combine outreach efforts on evergreen trees and holiday greenery disposal. Social media content for all three agencies focused on the invasive pest awareness and disposal options during December 2025 and January 2026.

Online advertising about invasive species ran on Google Display Ads and Meta platforms throughout the summer. Meta ads featured animations with invasive pests, while Google Display Ads used static images. The MDA ran a *Buy Local, Burn Local* ad campaign on Google from June 1 to August 31, 2025. The MDA is also running a Forest Pest Prevention animated ad campaign statewide on Meta that began June 1, 2025. The short animation featured in the campaign can be viewed at:

<https://youtube.com/shorts/ufZ6bFzvHYo?si=orL6AjwGSsVzRIL>.

Geo-targeted advertising ran on YouTube in five southeastern Minnesota counties from August 19 to September 30, 2025. These five counties may be suitable for tree of heaven to establish and for spotted lanternfly as it expands westward. Two focused on pest detection and pest prevention.

Collaborative Research

The MDA's Pest Detection Unit collaborates with the University of Minnesota, the USDA Forest Service Northern Research Station, and the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service on research projects. The MDA helps secure funding, collect data, and share research findings through outreach. Funding comes from both state and federal sources.

Emerald Ash Borer Biocontrol

The MDA continues to work with the USDA on research surrounding emerald ash borer (EAB) biological control. Staff have worked for multiple years on a study titled Persistence and Efficacy of EAB Parasitoids as Agents of Biocontrol. The project evaluates the persistence and effectiveness of two larval parasitoid wasps — *Tetrastichus planipennisi* and *Spathius galinae*. The study aims to determine whether these parasitoids can persist as EAB populations decline and to assess their efficacy across a north–south temperature gradient, which influences EAB development and parasitoid success. The project also examines ash tree health and regeneration along this gradient.

Researchers are analyzing five years of monitoring data collected from eight sites in Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri. Researchers will validate the Gould et al. (2020) predictive model linking EAB overwintering stages to latitude and temperature and will synthesize long-term data to inform future biocontrol strategies.

Methods include monitoring EAB density using baited funnel traps, tracking parasitoid establishment through sentinel logs and larval dissections, and felling and peeling infested trees to assess overwintering stages and parasitism rates. In 2025, the MDA deployed sentinel logs, made by infesting cut logs with EAB, at Lincoln Park, Fort Snelling State Park, and Whitewater Management Area. Five logs were placed at a time over four-week periods from June through September. Logs were then put into emergence tubes for a set time. All parasitoids that emerged were then collected and the logs debarked. Results from 2025 are pending.

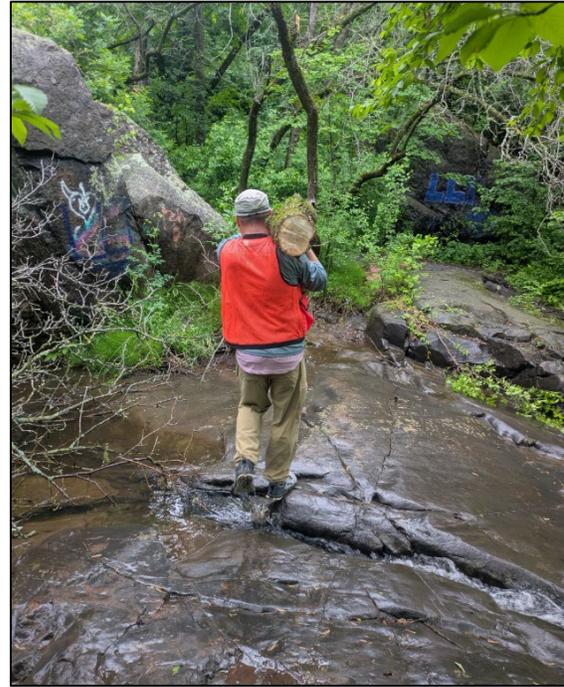
At Fort Snelling and Duluth, trees inoculated with EAB eggs in 2024 are being examined to evaluate parasitoid effectiveness under varying conditions. Ten small ash trees were selected in Lincoln Park and Fort Snelling State Park, and 20 EAB eggs were affixed to each tree in the late spring 2024. These trees were felled and peeled by the lead researcher and MDA staff in spring 2025 (Figures 9 and 10). Larvae and any parasitoids found were collected. This work will help determine annual mortality rates of EAB, and to investigate the various factors leading to EAB mortality at each site.

Ultimately, this work will provide critical insights into the long-term viability of parasitoid-based biocontrol and guide USDA decisions on where to prioritize releases for maximum impact, helping protect ash trees and optimize the use of public resources.

Figure 9. Ash logs with bark peeled off, revealing visible parasitoid cocoons within EAB galleries.



Figure 10. Jonathan Osthus, MDA, carries ash logs dissected to look for parasitoid establishment out of Lincoln Park in Duluth.



Red Star Rust

The detection of red star rust (*Gymnosporangium yamadae*) in Minnesota in 2022 revealed many gaps in information about managing this novel disease. In response, the MDA Plant Protection Division and the University of Minnesota (UMN) Departments of Horticulture and Plant Pathology received funding and began work on a Specialty Crop Block Grant titled *Identifying Best Management Practices for Red Star Rust, an Invasive Pathogen of Apple & Nursery Crops*.

In 2024, 23 apple and crabapple cultivars were tested for resistance to red star rust. Resistance testing was expanded to 52 cultivars in 2025. These trials included cultivars commonly grown in Minnesota as well as selections from the UMN apple breeding program. As a result of their resistance to red star rust, three breeding lines will be advanced in the program.

In addition, 511 crabapple trees at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum and 209 apple trees at the UMN Horticulture Research Center were monitored for red star rust in 2024 and 2025. Ninety percent of trees were infected with red star rust in 2025, but the severity of disease varied by cultivar. UMN researchers are analyzing data from all resistance trials and will share results with nurseries, landscape professionals, and apple growers.

In 2024, six juniper cultivars were sprayed with five different fungicides and then exposed to red star rust spores to determine which fungicides prevent infection. Because infections in junipers take two years to develop, results from this trial will be recorded in spring of 2026 and used to make recommendations to nurseries and landscape professionals.

Spore traps were placed in infested areas to monitor airborne spores. Researchers will analyze the collected spores to determine when spores are moved between junipers and apples.

Figure 11. Trial to test juniper susceptibility and fungicide sprays.



Figure 12. Difference in red star rust disease response in crabapple varieties 'Sutyzam' Sugar Tyme® (A) and 'Bob White' (B) leaves 10 weeks after infection. Photos by T. Enzenbacher.



Elongate Hemlock Scale Cold Tolerance

The MDA concluded experiments with the University of Minnesota and the USDA Forest Service on the cold tolerance of elongate hemlock scale. This invasive insect damages eastern hemlock and Fraser fir, including trees used for holiday decorations.

Researchers studied how cold temperatures affect its survival over time, testing females from Michigan and North Carolina at 37°F (3°C), 14°F (-10°C), and -4°F (-20°C). Survival decreased as temperatures fell. Insects survived well at 37°F. At 14°F, survival declined to 50% within weeks and 10% within months. At -4°F, mortality occurred much faster. However, recent winters have not been cold enough for long enough to kill most insects. Prolonged exposure to moderately cold temperatures will not stop the spread of this insect in the U.S. Exposure to temperatures below -4°F can be immediately lethal to some elongate hemlock scales. Results were published in *Environmental Entomology*. A publication summarizing the effects of brief, extreme cold on elongate hemlock scale is in progress.

Spotted Lanternfly Cold Tolerance

Spotted lanternfly (SLF) is an invasive insect with a broad host range capable of feeding on at least 65 host plants. Primary hosts of concern in Minnesota include grapes, apples, and several trees (especially maple and walnut) are significant specialty crops. First detected in the United States in 2014, SLF is now quickly spreading across the country. SLF is not established in Minnesota but is as close as Illinois. Its potential arrival in Minnesota is a particular concern to grape growers, apple growers, winemakers, and the nursery industry.

This year, the MDA continued its partnership with the University of Minnesota and USDA Forest Service on cold hardiness of spotted lanternfly. Spotted lanternfly is a threat to grapes, apples, walnuts, and several other hardwood trees. Current forecasts suggest SLF might not find the climate of Minnesota suitable, but these forecasts are based on comparisons of the climate here with the climate in other parts of the world where the insect has been reported. The insect overwinters in wax-covered egg masses laid on various surfaces, including host trees.

Our initial results show SLF can keep its body fluids from freezing until temperatures are much below -4°F. Temperatures that cause freezing, or are about to cause freezing, are lethal to the insect. Our initial results suggest that the insect would be expected to survive better in southern Minnesota, and these initial findings will be used to refine MDA surveys for the insect in 2026.

The MDA continues early detection surveys for this insect around the state and has launched targeted outreach and invasive species messaging to areas of the state where SLF is most likely to establish.

Past forest and landscape research collaborations have included:

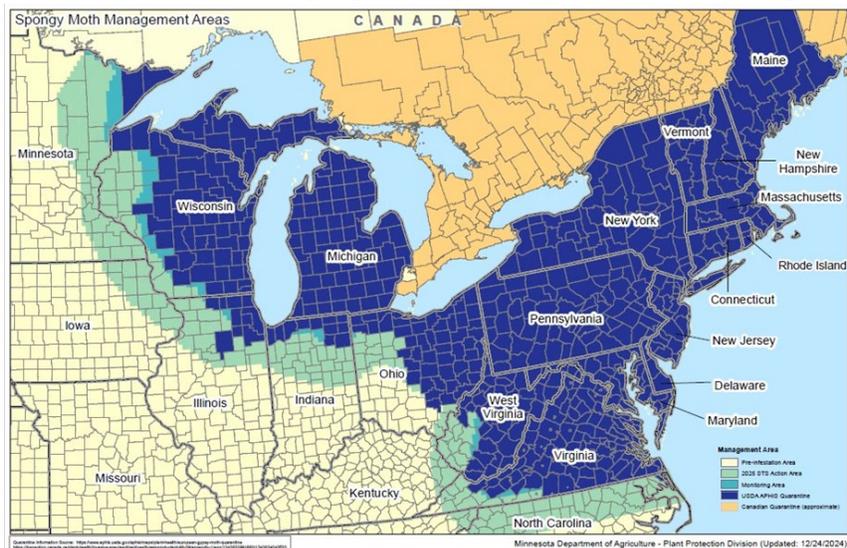
- Assessing risk of mountain pine beetle to native pines
- Determining host preferences of the velvet longhorned beetle
- Looking for the fungal pathogen and beetle complex that cause thousand cankers disease of walnut

Spongy Moth (*Lymantria dispar*)

Spongy moth is one of North America’s most destructive forest pests. It defoliates trees and shrubs and is a human nuisance during outbreaks. Introduced from Europe in Medford, Massachusetts in 1869, spongy moth is one of the oldest and most researched invasive species.

The MDA monitors the movement of spongy moth into the state and treats isolated infestations to protect the state’s forests, property and tourism industry. Efforts to slow the spread delay the costs and impacts that come with establishment. Minnesota is a member of the Slow the Spread (STS) Program, a national effort to reduce the spread of spongy moth to less than 5 miles per year, about 60% less than historical spread rate.

Figure 13. 2025 U.S. and Canadian spongy moth quarantine counties and management areas.



The MDA spongy moth program has three components:

1. Survey to collect data for early detection and drive management decisions
2. Treatments for eradication and population management
3. Regulatory/quarantine enforcement

For more information about spongy moth visit MDA, STS, and USDA APHIS spongy moth webpages www.mda.state.mn.us/spongymoth; www.slowthespread.org; www.aphis.usda.gov

Trapping Survey

Spongy moth survey traps are used for early detection, population estimates, and future survey and management decisions. Traps attract male moths using a lure that mimics the female pheromone. Most of the survey traps used during the 2025 season were delta traps, which are easily constructed but can reliably hold only about 15 moths each. High-capacity milk carton traps, which can hold up to 1,000 moths, were used in project areas where higher moth catches were anticipated in northeastern Minnesota and at one delimit site in southeastern Minnesota.

Figure 14. Delta trap



Figure 15. Milk carton trap



MDA Spongy Moth Survey Statistics

- Traps placed: 21,457
 - 21,432 set by MDA survey staff
 - 25 set by Three Rivers Parks District (TRPD) staff at their parks
- Positive traps: 2,615 positive traps
- Catch: 7,368 male spongy moths

Catch by region

- Southern region: 4,127 moths (56% of statewide catch; was only 21% in 2024)
- Northern region: 3,241 moths (44% of statewide catch)

Catch by Project Area

- State Eradication Area: 94 moths (1.3%)
- STS Action Area: 5,632 moths (76.4%)
- STS Monit1 & Monit2 Areas (W. Lake, E. St. Louis, and NE Carlton Counties): 1,642 moths (22.3%)

Figure 16. 2025 MDA spongy moth survey results map showing the total number of moths caught per county [2025 MDA ArGIS Online Spongy Moth Trapping Survey Results Map](#)

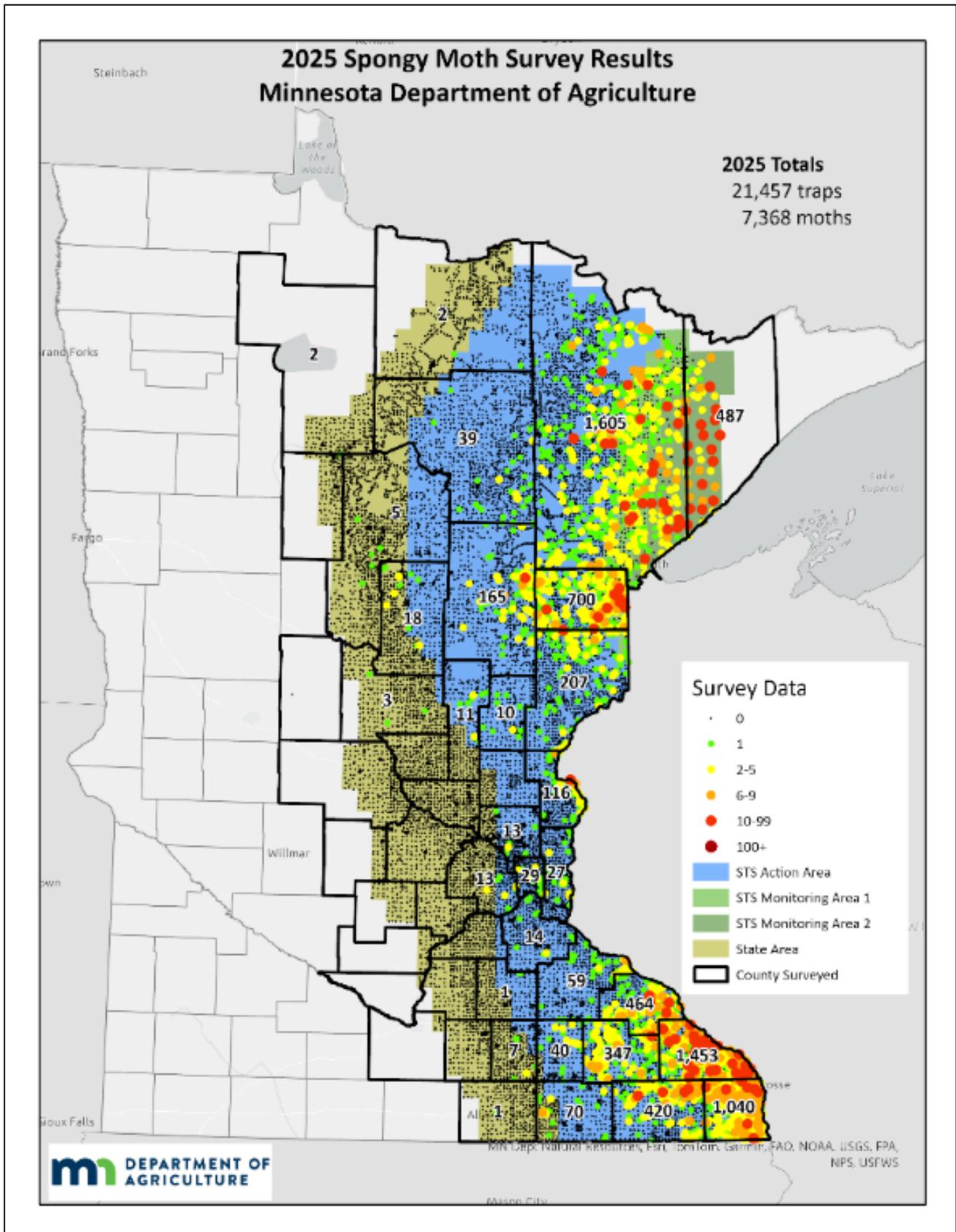
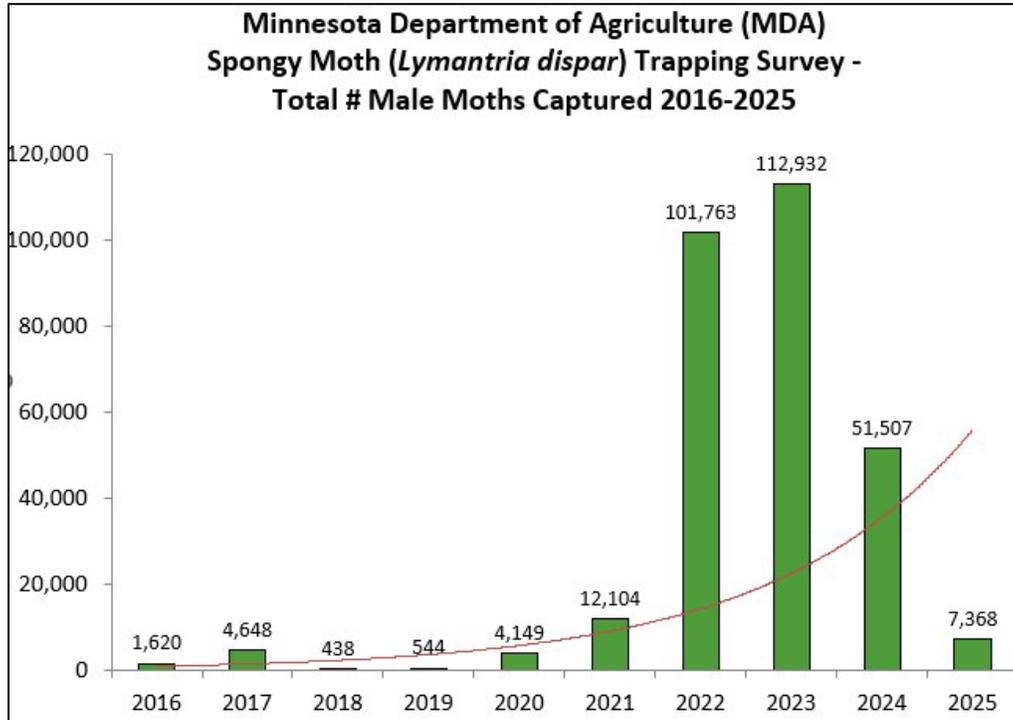


Figure 17. MDA annual trapping survey results, 2016-2025



Alternate Life Stage (ALS) Surveys

Trapping surveys with high thresholds of male moths are selected for more intense visual surveys in the fall to find Alternate Life Stages (ALS), including egg masses, larvae, pupae, or adult female moths. Finding male moths alone doesn't necessarily mean a reproducing population is present. Male moths can fly and may be blown far from their originating reproducing populations, while female moths cannot fly.

The goal of ALS surveys is to find evidence of reproducing populations by searching for life stages other than the male moths caught in traps. This information helps determine management strategies. ALS finds may also be reported by the public through EDDMapS or the MDA Report a Pest system.

Not all areas with positive traps can be surveyed for ALS, but sites are prioritized based on several factors, including:

- Location of trap sites relative to the population front
- Number of moths captured in traps
- Other trap catches in the surrounding area.
- Historical moth catch data.
- Proximity to high-risk or regulated sites

Figure 18. Spongy moth life stages on burlap-wrapped infested nursery stock.



Positive ALS finds may trigger follow-up treatments or a higher concentration of traps in the following survey season.

There were no new ALS finds in the state eradication (non-infested) area. All new 2025 ALS finds were within the STS project management areas at 13 sites:

- Two sites in the southern region of the state in the following counties: Winona and Ramsey.
- Eleven sites in the northern region of the state in the following counties: Carlton (six sites), Pine (one site), St. Louis (four sites).

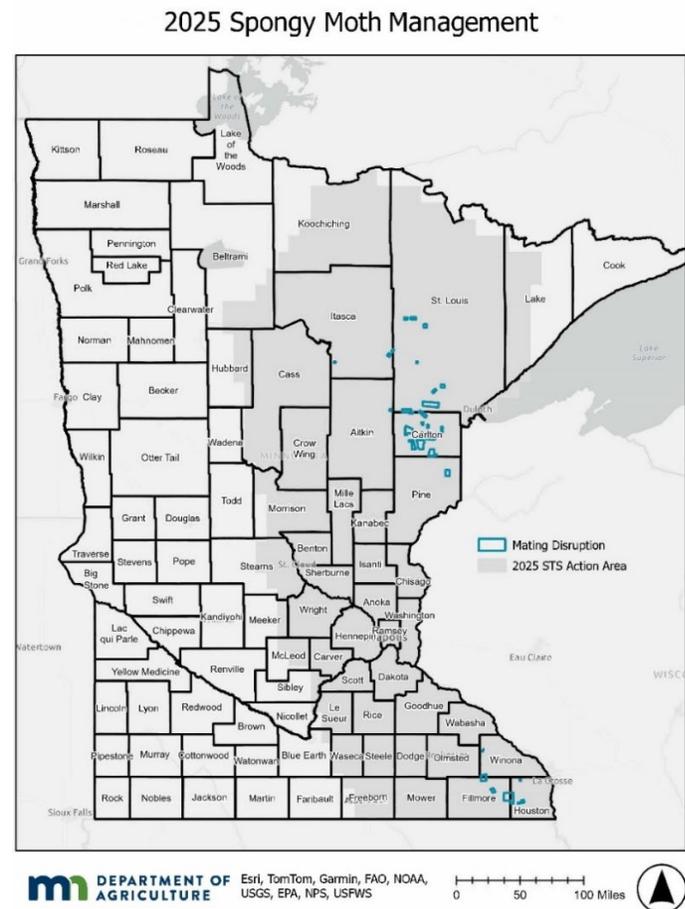
Management

Spongy moth management areas are determined based on fall ALS surveys at high catch trapping sites and analysis of trapping survey results using the STS Program Decision Algorithm.

In fall 2024, the STS Program Decision Algorithm identified 283 potential problem areas. State and U.S. Forest Service STS Program managers proposed 175,178 acres statewide for management, including mating disruption, Btk, or a combination of both.

Due to federal funding forecasts for the STS program, Minnesota reduced the proposed management area by 59,498 acres (34% of the originally proposed acreage), leaving 115,680 acres publicly announced for proposed management in early 2025. Ultimately, all Btk treatments (2,801 acres) were cancelled due to the uncertainty of federal funding. STS Trap and Treat funding was not awarded until July 10, 2025, which was well after Btk treatments would have needed to be completed. Mating disruption operations proceeded, resulting in the treatment of 98,015 acres.

Figure 19. 2025 spongy moth management areas.



For More Information

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