

## OAK PROCESSIONARY MOTH (OPM)

### What is OPM?

The oak processionary moth is a non-native species whose caterpillars feed on oak leaves and cause significant damage to the integrity of the tree. The species was accidentally introduced to the UK in 2005. Larvae follow each other nose to tail in a long processionary line between the nest and feeding areas which give them their name. Caterpillar hairs can cause respiratory problems, conjunctivitis and skin rashes in humans. Health problems can even occur when there is no direct contact with the caterpillars as their hairs fall off very easily. Abandoned nests will contain lots of hairs and shed skins and should be treated with care.



Figure 1: Small OPM nest found by Maydencroft in Hertfordshire



Figure 2: Maydencroft operative removing OPM nest

### Treatment for OPM

Effective treatment includes cutting out, vacuuming or burning of nests during the day when most caterpillars are in the nest. Chemical application can also be effective but only at early stages when larvae are constantly feeding. **Treatment of OPM should only be carried out by an appropriately trained professional.**

#### **‘SPOT IT, AVOID IT, REPORT IT’**

##### **DO NOT:**

- Touch or approach OPM nests or caterpillars;
- Try and remove nests or caterpillars yourself

##### **DO:**

- Immediately call an arborist or pest control expert to confirm and remove infestation;
- Report the sighting to the Forestry Commission.

**Maydencroft Limited have extensive knowledge of OPM and have successfully removed several OPM nests from the local area. If you find any evidence of OPM on your land and need the nest confirming and removing then please ring Patrick Venables, our tree pests and diseases expert on 01462 658764.**