



9<sup>th</sup> July, 2020

Circular 10/2020

**Re: Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*)**

To All Registered Foresters

I refer to a confirmed interception of the pest Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) commonly called OPM for short, which has been found very recently in a public park in Dublin. You may have seen the Department's social media posts. The single OPM nest found on one imported, recently planted amenity tree has been removed and destroyed, and the wider intensified DAFM survey has not yielded additional findings to date. This is the first finding of this pest on the island of Ireland. Ireland is recognised as a protected zone under EU legislation for this pest based on years of official survey data and we are the last EU Member State to be free from OPM. A Protected Zone is an area of the EU which is free from a quarantine organism despite favourable conditions for them to establish themselves.

Oak trees are the main host for this pest, and it is unlikely to be found on any tree other than oak. OPM defoliates and weakens oak trees and importantly can be a hazard to human and animal health through direct contact with the hairs of the caterpillars, which can provoke allergic reactions. Health problems can occur even if the larvae are not handled as the hairs break off readily and are dispersed in air currents. Abandoned nests contain shed skins, pupal cases and vast numbers of detached hairs and should be treated with extreme caution. This recent finding in Dublin is of even more concern considering the finding of the pest was located within a public park.

Plants that are greater than 8cm girth at 1.2m height are recognised as being of a higher risk of spreading the pest and this is reflected in the plant passporting requirements set out in the Plant Health Regulation. Oak plants for forestry tend to be less than 1m in height and are regarded as much lower risk than larger plants that might typically be planted for landscaping or amenity purposes as the larger plants are more susceptible to pest populations and more difficult to inspect. Nonetheless it is important that all possible pathways of introduction are pursued.

The source of the intercepted oak trees has already been traced. The Department is now required to carry out traceability on oak tree consignments which were moved within or imported into Ireland during the 2019/2020 planting season.

In carrying out this traceability we require your assistance and request that you:

Provide us with information of Invoices/delivery note and plant passport information for any oak trees you imported from outside Ireland during the 2019/2020 planting season. If you have imported oak plants it is important to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is informed and we request that you send the information to the [forestprotection@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:forestprotection@agriculture.gov.ie)

- Email address below by **5pm on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July**.
- Please also detail where and/or to whom these imported plants were sold to facilitate trace forward by the Department.

You are required to provide this information under the plant health regulation 2016/2031/EU which came into effect on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2019. This new Regulation updated the plant health regime



in order to provide more effective measures to protect the Union's territory against destructive plant pests and diseases. It also aims to ensure safe trade.

We attach the Department's information note on OPM together with a Trader Notice issued by the Department's Horticulture and Plant Health Division relating to this finding for your information.

We would like to thank you for your cooperation in this matter to deal with the finding and to aid maintain Ireland's Protected Zone for this pest.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact the Forest Health Section of the Forestry Inspectorate at: [forestprotection@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:forestprotection@agriculture.gov.ie)

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