



NCDA&CS

Plant Industry Division Plant Protection Section

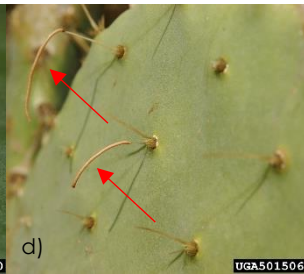
PEST ALERT

Cactus Moth

Cactoblastis cactorum (Berg 1885)
(Lepidoptera: Pyralidae)



Cactus moth, *Cactoblastis cactorum* (Berg), is an invasive moth that was first detected in the United States in Florida in 1989. This insect is a serious pest of prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia* spp.) in North America. Infestations of this moth can destroy entire stands of prickly pear and threatens natural biodiversity, horticulture, and forage in the Southwestern U.S. and Mexico.



a) Cactus moth larvae on *Opuntia*; b) Adult cactus moth on cladode of prickly pear cactus; c) Adult cactus moth laying eggs in form of stick; d) Cactus moth egg-sticks mimicking cactus spines; e) Damage to prickly pear cactus caused by cactus moth infestation

HOSTS:

This pest is known to infest prickly pear cactus in the genus *Opuntia*. There are a few records of this pest attacking plants in the genus *Nopalea* but this is the exception rather than the rule.

IDENTIFICATION:

Cactus moth adults lay eggs in a chain or stick-like form. These 'egg-sticks' mimic the spines of prickly pear cactus. When the eggs hatch larvae (bright orange with large dark spots forming bands) crawl onto the cactus pad and burrow into it. Inside the larvae voraciously feed and move from pad to pad until the food supply runs out. Larvae that have fully developed will leave the plant and spin their cocoons in nearby leaf litter. The adult moth emerges and the cycle begins anew.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

This pest causes extensive damage to prickly pear cactus. Symptoms can be seen throughout the year, though usually less in the colder months. Infested cactus will show signs of frass and sap seeping out of wounds. The pads will eventually become transparent and hollow from the internal feeding.

WHAT TO DO:

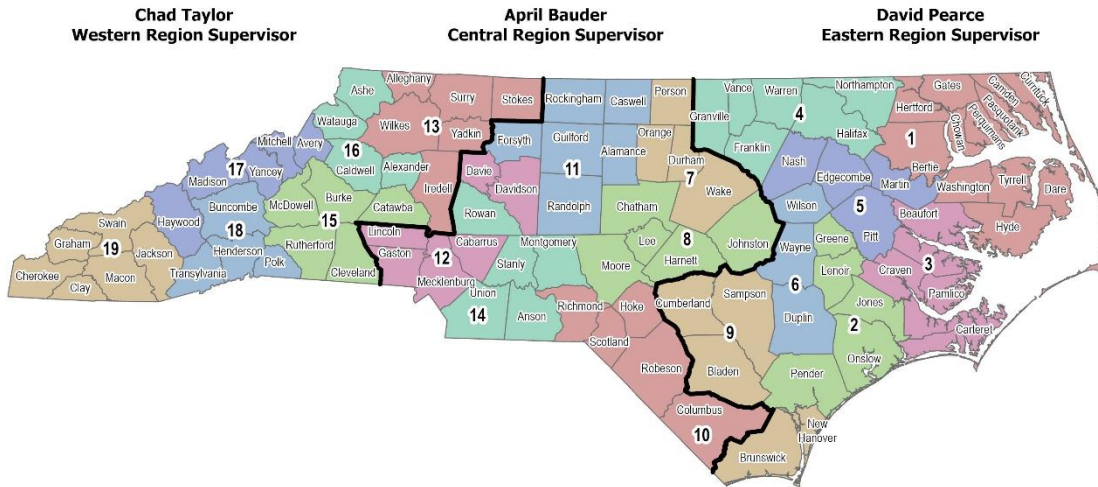
Collect a specimen: Specimens of any life stage may be submitted to the NCSU Insect and Disease Clinic for verification. Please contact your local plant pest specialist (contact information on back of this alert) for assistance with specimen submission.

Take a picture: A photograph of any life stage can be submitted to newpest@ncagr.gov.

Report a site: Contact your local county extension agent (call 919-515-2813 or visit <https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/local-county-center>) or report your find to 800-206-9333 or newpest@ncagr.gov.

Note: Cactus moth was first detected on Oak Island in Brunswick County, North Carolina in June 2017. This is the northernmost detection of this pest in the United States. While originally used as a biocontrol agent in Australia in the early 1900's this insect is a serious pest in the United States making early detection and rapid response critical to slowing its spread.

NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
Plant Industry Division – Plant Protection Section
Plant Pest Specialist Work Areas



Specialist's Names, Contact Information and Assigned Areas

Area 1:	Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Hertford, Hyde, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell, Washington	Joe Davenport	(919) 608-0635
Area 2:	Greene, Jones, Lenoir, Onslow, Pender	Bonnie Faulkner	(252) 521-3180
Area 3:	Beaufort, Carteret, Craven, Pamlico	David Pearce	(252) 670-1742
Area 4:	Franklin, Granville, Halifax, Northampton, Vance, Warren	Derreck Long	(252) 567-1247
Area 5:	Edgecombe, Martin, Nash, Pitt	Juliet Whitehurst	(919) 218-1765
Area 6:	Duplin, Wayne, Wilson	Scott Cannady	(919) 270-4910
Area 7:	Durham, Orange, Person, Wake	April Bauder	(919) 777-3251
Area 8:	Chatham, Harnett, Johnston, Lee, Moore	Jensen McLamb	(910) 638-4943
Area 9:	Bladen, Brunswick, Cumberland, New Hanover, Sampson	Chris Carter	(919) 218-8654
Area 10:	Columbus, Hoke, Richmond, Robeson, Scotland	Michelle Shooter	(910) 734-3477
Area 11:	Alamance, Caswell, Forsyth, Guilford, Randolph, Rockingham	Andrew Allen	(336) 404-5873
Area 12:	Cabarrus, Davidson, Davie, Gaston, Mecklenburg, Lincoln	Heidi Humlicek	(406) 750-6432
Area 13:	Alleghany, Iredell, Stokes, Surry, Wilkes, Yadkin	Ginger Hemmings	(336) 314-9334
Area 14:	Anson, Montgomery, Rowan, Stanly, Union	Samuel Harris	(919) 604-3896
Area 15:	Burke, Catawba, Cleveland, McDowell, Rutherford	Amanda Cook	(828) 443-1289
Area 16:	Alexander, Ashe, Caldwell, Watauga	Chad Taylor	(336) 466-0478
Area 17:	Avery, Haywood, Madison, Mitchell, Yancey	Tim Hartley	(828) 260-0588
Area 18:	Buncombe, Henderson, Polk, Transylvania	Sue Dial	(828) 577-0915
Area 19:	Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon, Swain	Ryan Holquist	(828) 421-5445

Mailing Address: 1060 Mail Service Center, Raleigh NC 27699-1060

Physical Address: 216 West Jones Street, Raleigh NC 27603

Phone: (919) 707-3730 | Fax: (919) 733-1041

Please visit our website at www.ncagr.gov/plantindustry for more information!