

Carpenterworm, *Prionoxystus robiniae* statewide

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Description: Carpenterworms (Lepidoptera: Family Cossidae) are pests of ash, cottonwoods, elm, and other hardwoods. They are secondary pests, and they normally hit stressed, older, and dying trees, particularly cottonwoods in shelterbelts. They are pests in their larval or immature stage (also called caterpillars) and moths as adults. Trees that are infested are likely already dead or dying, and management is not usually an option.

Damage: The damage is from the larval stage from boring into the sapwood and heartwood of both trunks and large branches. Their exit holes are large and round and will also sometimes show flaking bark around the same areas. Damage can consist of greatly reduced strength of the bark, which can make larger branches susceptible to breakage during high winds. A heavily infested tree will look misshapen and unhealthy. The mature caterpillars can be quite large (mature larvae can reach up to 3" long), which could also be attracting woodpeckers that would be pecking away at the bark to get to the larvae. The pupal casings are also left sticking out of the tree when the moth is exiting (brown paper-like casings).

Life cycle: The moths will overwinter as larvae under the bark of the trees, will pupate (immobile stage) in the spring, and they will become adult moths likely around early June. Their life cycle can be 3-4 years for one generation in northern areas like MT. The female can lay 300-600 eggs under the bark in wounded areas, crevices, or scarred areas.



Figure 1. Carpenterworm in hole.



Figure 2. Carpenterworm larva in cottonwood.



Figure 3. Carpenterworm frass/tunneling damage.



Figure 4. Crochets on the carpenterworm (on underside of larva) (beetle larvae don't have these crochets).