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FOREST HEALTH INFORMATION ALERT

March 2016

FEMALE PINYON NEEDLE SCALES ARE ALREADY LAYING THEIR EGGS IN THE PRESCOTT AREA

According to Arizona State Forestry, female pinyon needle scales are laying their eggs in the Prescott area. This complex native insect which defoliates and kills pinyon pines, can be found spread over thousands of acres from Prescott Country Club to the Prescott Basin, and to Williamson Valley past Hootenanny Holler, all the way to the Las Vegas Ranch area.

Due to the very warm temperatures we've experienced recently, female scales have already emerged from their over-wintering stage on the needles. Very noticeable clusters of yellow eggs held together in loose, white, cottony webbing are being laid by the females mainly on the trunk, at the base of the tree, in branch crotches and along the underside of branches. The females will die shortly after egg laying is completed, and can be seen imbedded in the egg mass.



Heavily infested pinyons can be easily detected by the yellow or orange discoloration of older needles towards the back of the branch. The needles are covered with small, black, bean-shaped scales which pierce the foliage and remove the sap, causing the needles to discolor, dry, and fall off.

Unless the forecast for a strong El Niño this winter-spring returns with heavy snows and cold temperatures, pinyon needle scale eggs will very likely begin hatching by the end of March, reinfesting your trees. **Remove the eggs from your trees as soon as possible!**

Control of this stage of the insect involves, Step 1: Washing the eggs off branches and trunk with a garden hose equipped with a high pressure nozzle and allowing eggs and litter one to two days to dry. Step 2: Raking eggs, litter and debris out from under the tree, and Step 3: Properly disposing of the eggs in plastic garbage bags. Raking may not be practical if heavy brush, rocks or other material is present under the tree. However, washing the eggs off the tree is still recommended.



Removal of the eggs from your pinyons will be simplified if you have already treated your vegetation for fire prevention reasons.

Fire prevention treatment information: <http://www.firewise.org/usa-recognition-program.aspx>

Unless there are local water restrictions, consider slow, deep, and infrequent watering of your infested pinyons nearest your home, starting as soon as your soils dry out, with a soaker hose placed around the drip line of the tree. Continue watering until “monsoon” rains are well established.

Proper watering information brochure: <http://cals.arizona.edu/pubs/water/az1298.pdf>.

For further information about this insect, or other forest and woodland health concerns in the Prescott area, contact: Bob Celaya, Forest Health Specialist, Office of the State Forester at (602) 771-1415 bobcelaya@azsf.gov or our Northwest District office at (928) 778-9567.