

Per article 19 of a piece of legislation known as Healthy Vegetation Act 43/2002, the Formentera environment office wishes to remind islanders of their duty to report any pine processionary nests they discover and maintain wooded areas on their property in healthy conditions. Recently, the Healthy Forests Service of the Balearic Islands' Natural Spaces and Biodiversity Section used a specially adapted helicopter to tackle the pine processionary plague with aerial dustings of the biological agent Bacillus thuringiensis.

Environment councillor Antonio J. Sanz held it up as "a particularly important measure" and reminded landowners on the island that they are responsible for removing nests or contacting the environment office should doing so prove impossible.

The caterpillars' winter march towards untreated corners of the island is visible in dry leaves at the tips of branches and the pests' formation into nests to stay warm. The pine processionary feeds on the leaves of white pines, reaping grave damage if the feedings become intense or frequent enough, or if the affected trees are in a weakened state. Bearing this last point in mind is particularly important, since the pest can become highly problematic for pine groves.

The environment arm of the Consell de Formentera and the Balearic Healthy Forests' Service wish to remind islanders:

1.- Report any detected pine processionary caterpillars, including location and number of nests, to the authorities. This can be done on the Linea Verde app, online, or in person at the Department of Environment.

2.- Any detected nests should be destroyed.

3.- The best way to stem the pine processionary's spread is by cutting loose its nests and incinerating them.

4.- Protective measures (wearing long-sleeved shirts, gloves and protective goggles) are recommended to make sure the caterpillar's irritating hairs don't affect the person doing the cutting.

5.- Remember that the caterpillar's hairs can came come off in the wind (or when a nest is cut loose) and cause rashes or allergic reactions if they come in contact with skin. Hence, individuals are encouraged to cut the nests with one's back to oncoming wind.

6.- Nests that are removed should be incinerated one by one, far from forested areas to keep the rist of fire to a minimum.

7.- The caterpillars can also be destroyed by squashing them mechanically or shooting at them with a firearm. In the latter case, the operator of the gun must possess a hunting permit and meet other regulations concerning open hunting and special seasonal guidelines (as posted in issue 91 of the Balearic gazette of 6 July 2019).

For more information visit the Healthy Forests' Service website at http://sanitatforestal.caib.es , call the office at 971 17 66 66 or send them an email (sanitatforestal@caib.es). Islanders can alternately visit Formentera's environment office (in Sant Ferran at Carrer Mallorca, 15), telephone the office at 971 32 12 10 (extension 1) or email mediambient@conselldeformentera.cat.

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Department of Communication
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