

The Spread of Beetle Infestation



- The Mountain Pine Beetle (*dedrotonus ponderosae* Hopkins) can be found in British Columbia and Alberta, and throughout the western United States into Mexico.
- The current outbreak of Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) is the largest insect epidemic in North American recorded history and can be traced back to 1993 when the beetle population in the B.C. Interior began to increase.
- More than 9.2 million hectares of pine forest have been devastated by the beetle in B.C.
- The B.C. beetle epidemic, which is just now approaching its peak, can be blamed on three factors:
 - 1) Fire prevention in B.C.'s forests left the province with a profusion of mature Lodgepole pine.
 - 2) Climate change: B.C. has experienced a series of mild winters and hot, dry summers, allowing the beetles to not only thrive, but to spread further north and west than ever before.
 - 3) A lack of effective control action during the outbreaks early stages.
- In the summer of 2006, there was a mass beetle flight (aided by high winds) across the Rockies into Alberta, which had been thought to be outside the beetle's natural habitat range. The MPB has now been identified, and is expected to continue to spread, in:
 - The Smoky Area
 - The Peace Area
 - The Foothills Area
 - The Woodlands Area
 - The Southern Rockies
 - The Lesser Slave Area
- Surveys are ongoing but as of early March 2007, it is estimated 3 million trees in Alberta are infested.

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- There is likelihood the beetle will “jump species”; once it exhausts the supply of Lodgepole Pine in B.C and Alberta, it is expected the beetle will easily adapt and jump to the Jack Pine. The Jack Pine ranges across the northern boreal forest and the entirety of Canada.
- There are three stages in a MPB attack: green, red and grey. Newly killed trees turn a bright red colour. 3-4 years after infestation, the tree loses all colour and foliage, turning grey.
- The direction and spread rate of beetle infestation is impossible to predict exactly.



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