

Pest Profile



Photo credit: Aaron Hunt, bugguide.net

Common Name: Yellow woolly bear

Scientific Name: *Spilosoma virginica*

Order and Family: Lepidoptera, Erebidae

Size and Appearance:

| | Adult | Egg | Larva/Nymph | Pupae (if applicable) |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Length (mm) | Wingspan nearly 40mm. | About 0.6 mm in diameter. | Fully grown caterpillar may be as long as 50 mm. | Approximately 16 mm long. |
| Appearance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moth is nearly pure white except for the abdomen, and a few black spots on each wing. - Adults have one black spot on their forewing and three spots on their hindwing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - White to golden-yellow, spherical eggs. - Eggs are laid in clusters of about 50 to 60. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caterpillars are densely covered with long and short hairs; they may be pale yellow, brownish-yellow, red, or white in color. It usually blackens in color near the head. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reddish-brown, enveloped by a thin, fragile silken cocoon. |

Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.): Chewing, larvae.

Host plant/s: Yellow woolly bear caterpillars feed on a wide range of garden, field, and ornamental crops as well as weeds. Some vegetable hosts include asparagus, bean, beet, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celery, corn, eggplant, onion, parsnip, pea, potato, pumpkin, radish, rhubarb, salsify, squash, sweet potato, and turnip.

Description of Damage (larvae and adults): Caterpillars consume flowers, leaves, tender stems, and fruit buds. Plants may be skeletonized by heavy infestations. Young larvae feed in colonies on the underside of leaves. As they mature, caterpillars disperse and feed on more exposed sites.

References:

Cranshaw, W. (2004). *The Ultimate Guide to Backyard Bugs: Garden Insects of North America*. Princeton University Press.

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