



Colorado State Forest Service  
5060 Campus Delivery  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, CO 80523-5060  
970.491.6303; FAX 970.491.7736  
<http://csfs.colostate.edu/>

# NEWS

## **For Immediate Release**

July 9, 2015

**Contact for Reporters:** Ryan Lockwood

970.491.8970

[ryan.lockwood@colostate.edu](mailto:ryan.lockwood@colostate.edu)

### **Pine needle scale infestation increasing in high country valleys**

**GRANBY, Colo.** – Localized infestations of pine needle scale – a native insect that feeds on the needles of most species of pine, spruce and fir trees – are on the rise on private lands in Grand, Summit and Eagle counties. While periodic needle scale infestations are a common occurrence in Colorado’s mountain forests, they typically have minimal impacts, very limited geographic scope and are short-lived, lasting one or two years. In contrast, local foresters say the current infestations have been widespread and have endured over the past four to five years in some areas.

“These infestations have become so heavy and persistent in some areas that we are seeing many trees die with no other insect or disease influence,” said Ron Cousineau, district forester for the Colorado State Forest Service Granby District. “We have never seen pine needle scale become this damaging in this part of the state.”

Pine needle scales feed on needles, which can weaken affected trees and cause needle drop and dieback. Scale infestations also can lead to increased susceptibility to other insects or diseases. During outbreaks, the scale-covered needles can give trees the appearance that they are spattered with white paint.

Cousineau says impacted areas currently are limited to conifers in mountain valleys, most notably blue spruce that have been heavily impacted throughout the town of Vail, and lodgepole pines in the Fraser Valley and in small pockets in Summit County. The areas of heaviest infestation have been observed within or adjacent to locations that have been heavily sprayed to control mountain pine beetle over the past decade, which Cousineau says he thinks may have influenced the current infestation.

“The concentrated spraying for mountain pine beetles may have contributed to the build-up of this insect, by killing beneficial parasitic insects that would normally keep scale populations in check,” he said.

Several natural enemies help control needle scale populations, including some predatory beetles and parasitic wasps. Impacts of scale infestations also may be mitigated using horticultural oils or insecticides, if applied at the appropriate time of year and precisely timed with the insect’s “crawler” stage.

Foresters are working to determine the best course of action to minimize further impacts from the needle scale outbreak. At this time, they caution against further chemical spraying of impacted trees.

For more information, contact the CSFS Granby District at 970-887-3121.