

EASTERN HEATH SNAIL

Xerolenta obvia

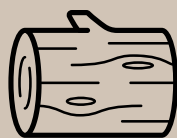
Identification/Origin

Eastern heath snails are native to eastern, central, and southern Europe and are found in North America in only a few locations. They have a medium shell around the size of a dime, spiralized with 5- 6 whorls, and a dull, opaque white shell with a single large dark band above the periphery and up to six paler bands below. Eastern heath snails are hermaphroditic and reproduce through self-fertilization they lay eggs in the soil at a depth of 2cm. Their development is variable, with some individuals developing quickly within a year, while others may live for 3-4 years or longer.

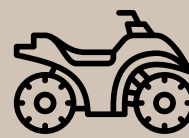
Level of Infestation in Montana

The first reported population of Eastern heath snail in western North America was detected in Montana in 2012 in southeast Cascade County. Following the initial 2012 detection, the species has since spread to additional areas of Cascade County and elsewhere to Chouteau, Judith Basin, and Fergus Counties.

Pathways



Firewood & wood products



Recreational vehicles



Livestock or contaminated feed



Rail transport



Camping, hunting & other off trail outdoor activities



Cars, trucks, trailers, highway vehicles



Reporting

Any sightings of suspect snails should be reported to the Montana Department of Agriculture (406-444-9430 or agr@mt.gov), USDA APHIS PPQ (406-449-5210), or your local Montana State University county Extension office.

Impacts

This species feeds on various plants and climbs on vegetation to escape high temperatures. It masses and attaches to hard surfaces like rail cars, shipping containers, and stone and granite tiles. It is considered a pest due to its potential to reduce crop yield, contaminate fruits, vegetables, and hay, and transmit diseases. Similar species have had significant impacts on agriculture in Australia after being introduced.

Regional Ramifications

Eastern heath snails are adapted to extreme temperatures and precipitation and pose significant threats to Montana's agriculture. They cause issues with mechanical hay harvest, mass on equipment and infrastructure, and are easily spread to new environments. Once transported, they can colonize a new area with just one snail.

More Information

More information about the eastern heath snail can be found on the Montana State University Extension website or on the Montana Field Guide website.



Distribution of EHS, MNHP 2024