

## **Bamboo Moth and Other 'Hairy Caterpillars' Reported Through MAF's Public Enquiry Surveillance Programme**

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The New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry provides an Exotic Pest and Disease Emergency Hotline service to members of the public allowing them to report any unusual insect or plant disease. This autumn a high number of 'hairy caterpillars' were reported from the Auckland area. With pertinent questions it was possible to rule out high profile exotics such as the recently eradicated painted apple moth, *Teia anartoides* and gypsy moth, *Lymantria dispar* (Lepidoptera: Lymantriidae). The caller descriptions were all recognisable as the recently established bamboo moth, *Artona martini* (Lepidoptera: Zygaenidae). *Artona martini* was first recorded in Northland in 1996 and has slowly been extending its distribution. In its native Asian range *A. martini* is known to have occasional outbreaks, and this is what appears to have happened during the Auckland summer of 2010-2011. These 'hairy caterpillar' enquires provided an opportunity to give callers positive reinforcement for taking the time to report and assisted in promoting awareness of other exotic Lepidoptera not yet established in New Zealand. The Auckland bamboo moth observations are summarised with a comparison of other types of enquires received during the same period.

