

There have been several reports of apples in Armagh being attacked by a pest which has left shallow circular holes in the fruit.

The pest that has caused this damage is Dock Sawfly (*Ametastegia glabrata*), which is an occasional pest on apple trees. Although the damage is like that caused by codling moth, there is no frass (debris) present which is a defining characteristic of codling moth damage. In addition, the hole caused by the Dock Sawfly may have a red ring around the wound, which can subsequently be colonised by decay fungi.

In the autumn, larvae of the sawfly reared on weeds in orchards may burrow into apples but then finding them unsuitable they usually migrate to other hosts. This is the reason no larvae are found inside the circular holes on the fruit at harvest.



Figures 1 and 2: Characteristic rounds entry wounds caused by Dock sawfly larvae – note absence of frass around holes

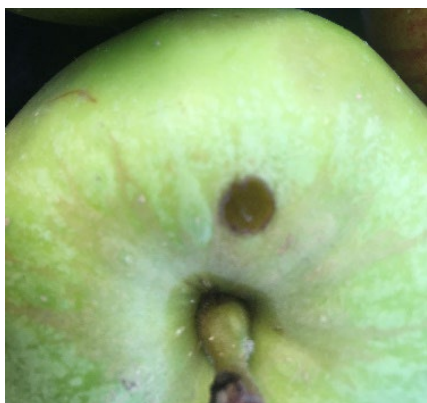


Figure 3 and 4: Fresh damage to apple and section through initial entry wound

The insect normally goes through its life cycle on plants belonging to the buckwheat family (dock, sorrel, knotweeds, bindweeds, etc.) and usually overwinters on these plants. However, in some years where there is a heavy weed infestation (infestation on the weeds?), the fly may seek out alternative overwintering sites. Adult sawfly will lay eggs on the cheeks and tops of apples, with the emerging larvae then creating several holes.

Damage is most common in apples that are hanging close to weeds. An effective weed management program of mowing and use of herbicides generally constitutes a good means of prevention.

If you require further information on this fruit pest, please contact Mark Huey, Top Fruit Development Adviser CAFRE, mobile: 07785344244 or email: Mark.huey@daera-ni.gov.uk