

Signage, Restricting Access and Communications

There are a number of options to manage the human and animal health risks associated with OPM that can be used alongside chemical control or nest removal or used when these methods are not appropriate.

Assess the Risk – Management Plans and Site Zoning

As part of a site OPM management plan the risks to human and animal health should be assessed. Within this risk assessment the site could be separated into zones which reflect the different level of risk at different locations on the site. Appropriate management methods can be introduced based on a zone's risk, for example chemical treatment of trees and/or restricting access in a high-risk zone where people are encouraged to spend long amounts of time in close proximity to OPM.

Signage

Signs can be used to raise awareness and warn visitors of the risks associated with OPM. Signs should be clearly visible and erected at suitable locations such as site entrances and near high-risk zones. Signs can be fixed or erected in time for the OPM season each year. A poster is available from the Forestry Commission [here](#).

Restricting Access

Where the risks to human and animal health are considered high it may be appropriate to control OPM using other methods (e.g. through chemical treatment) and restrict access to parts of the site. This can include cordoning off individual trees, pathways or high-risk zones. The extent to which you need to restrict access will be site and situation specific and should be considered as part of a wider OPM management plan.

Off-site Communications

Off-site communication can be used to raise awareness of OPM and inform site users of the risks associated with OPM and actions to take or avoid. Examples include newsletters, social media posts, emails and local news articles.

PROS	CONS
Communication and awareness raising of OPM	Risk of increased spread of OPM
Low cost - appropriate signage and/or materials to restrict access	Risk of ecological impacts if OPM causes significant decline of oak trees
OPM may reach a “natural balance” with natural enemies, and could have low long-term impacts on oak, ecosystem or human health even without intervention.	Risk of reputational damage if OPM causes widespread damage
	Risk of increased human health impacts



Picture: Example sign available to download from the Forestry Commission

Things to Consider

- Different management techniques may be suitable for different areas of your site depending on the level and type of risk. For example, areas where you are encouraging the public to spend elongated periods of times, such as picnic benches and playgrounds, may require more risk management measures. It is important to conduct a full risk assessment of the site to inform management decisions.
- Stakeholders such as friends' groups and local residents can play a role here. The OPM management plan will prompt you to consider and record this
- Social media platforms offer an effective way to communicate with site users, neighbours and other stakeholder groups.

Timings

These measures can be targeted in line with the OPM season. Irritating hairs will develop from mid-late May. Although moths will emerge in August-September old nests may still pose a health risk that will need to be assessed and managed appropriately.