

## East Texas Forest Health

Allen Smith, East Texas Forest Health Coordinator with Texas A & M Forest Service, talked with the Tyler County Forest Landowner Association on Saturday, March 21, 2026.

For six weeks every year, Texas A&M Forest Services sets pheromone-baited traps for Southern Pine Bark (SPB) beetles in multiple counties, including Tyler County. Simultaneously, they set traps for Cleridae, or checkered beetles, which are natural predators of the SPB beetles. The last time the traps caught either was in 2006 – and there was only one beetle in one trap.

Ips bark beetles, also known as pine engraver beetles, typically attack stressed or damaged trees. Usually a standalone tree is attacked, but a cluster of trees may be attacked if the entire stand is under stress.

Needlecast is a fungal disease that is not considered serious because the infected pine trees usually recover. Initially, the infected pine tree will drop all its needles and look like it is dying. Then it will create new needles and appear healthy again, although it may be weakened by the experience.

Brown Spot Needle Blight (BSNB), first identified in 1929, is a fungal disease that is historically associated with longleaf pines while they are in the grass stage. It is rarely fatal and is suppressed by the control burns which are recommended for longleaf pines. However, since 2016, BSNB infections have been observed in loblolly plantations. It is suspected that there is a genetic characteristic of some loblolly seedlings that make the trees susceptible to the disease. BSNB has recently been spotted in Hardin, Polk, Newton, and Angelina counties. Texas A & M Forest Service encourages tree farmers in Tyler County to be on the outlook for small, yellow-to-brown spots with yellow halos on pine needles. The spots will turn brown, often causing brown tips with green bases. Infected needles later turn completely brown, die, and fall off. Small black pimple-like bumps often appear on dead needles. The fungus starts at the bottom of a tree and works its way up. The damage is most visible in late summer or fall. Tree farmers should contact Texas A & M Forest Service if they suspect BSNB.

Emerald Ash Borers have been confirmed as far south as Rusk and Bell counties as they continue their migration through Texas. The Emerald Ash Borers are killing all ash trees in their path and are classified as a state regulated pest. Quarantines and fines can be imposed once they are detected in a county.

Allen Smith reported that Texas A & M Forest Service has financial assistance to treat leaf-cutter ants, also known as town ants. They are considered one of the most damaging pests to newly established pine plantations.