Jumping Worms

Amynthas/Metaphire complex

Invasive Species Alert July 2016 - revised August 2020

ILLINOIS Extension



JUMPING WORMS

Jumping worms, a complex of non-native earthworm species in the Amynthas and Metaphire genera, were first discovered in Illinois in 2015 and have since been identified in 20 counties across the state, indicating they are already widely distributed throughout Illinois. Jumping worms are earthworms native to East Asia that were first introduced likely accidentally, but are also occasionally sold for fishing bait or vermiculture. They also have been called crazy worms, Alabama jumpers, and snake worms.

Jumping worms are voracious consumers of organic material, which can affect soil quality. They breed quickly and eggs survive Illinois winters. Adults reach maturity in approximately 60 days, allowing populations

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to grow exponentially during the growing season. These worms are also capable of reproducing without mating.

IMPACTS

There are concerns about the effects these worms will have on forests and other natural areas as well as agricultural and landscaped areas. Populations of jumping worms have the potential to change the soil structure, deplete available nutrients, damage plant roots, and alter water holding capacity of the soil.

Jumping worms are considered to be highly invasive and detrimental in many areas of the United States. The University of Illinois Extension is tracking known populations of jumping worms across Illinois and is particularly interested in populations in previously unreported counties. If anyone suspects they have a population of jumping worms, please contact Extension Forester Chris Evans (cwevans@illinois.edu or 618-695-

3383) or the Plant Clinic (plantclinic@illinois.edu or 217-333-0519).

COUNTY-LEVEL DISTRIBUTION OF JUMPING WORMS IN ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2020

RED INDICATES COUNTIES WITH CONFIRMED POPULATIONS

PINK INDICIATES COUNTIES WITH SUSPECTED POPULATIONS





SPREAD PREVENTION

Prevent the spread of jumping worms and their eggs by cleaning equipment before moving to another site, reducing the transportation of mulch and soil, and carefully inspecting nursery plants before installing them in a new landscape.

RELEVANT WEBSITES

Illinois Extension Forestry

https://extension.illinois.edu/forestry

Illinois Plant Clinic

http://web.extension.illinois.edu/plantclinic/

Wisconsin DNR Jumping Worm page

 http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/fact/ jumpingWorm/index.html

RECOMMENDED CITATION

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IDENTIFICATION

- Large worm (4-8 inches)
- Generally darker on top than the bottom
- Smooth, clitellum (colored band) that completely circles the body and is not raised. Starts at or around the fourteenth segment
- Skin glossy or iridescent
- Thrashes wildly when handled or disturbed
- Can shed tail in defense
- Found in leaf litter and top 3-4 inches of soil
- Adults usually seen from mid-summer through first hard freeze
- Established populations can produce a unique soil signature that resembles coffee grounds



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