



# JUMPING WORMS IN MAINE 2025 UPDATE

Brittany Schappach, Forest Entomologist  
brittany.schappach@maine.gov | 207-944-6472

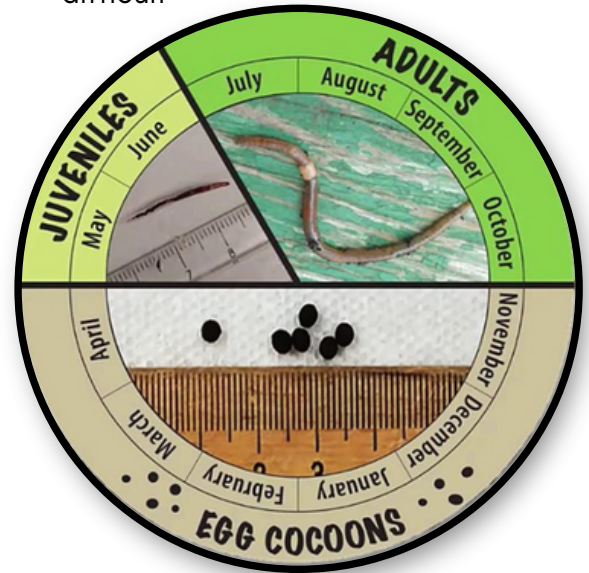
## What are Jumping Worms?

- Invasive earthworm that rapidly eats and disrupts soil nutrients and soil moisture
- First detected in Maine in **2017**
- Populations erupted in 2023
  - Now detected in 13/16 counties



## When are they active?

- Worms active from May–October
- Adults **only live 1 year**
- Cocoons overwinter and usually emerge the following spring
- “Seed banking” makes management difficult



## Why are they a concern?

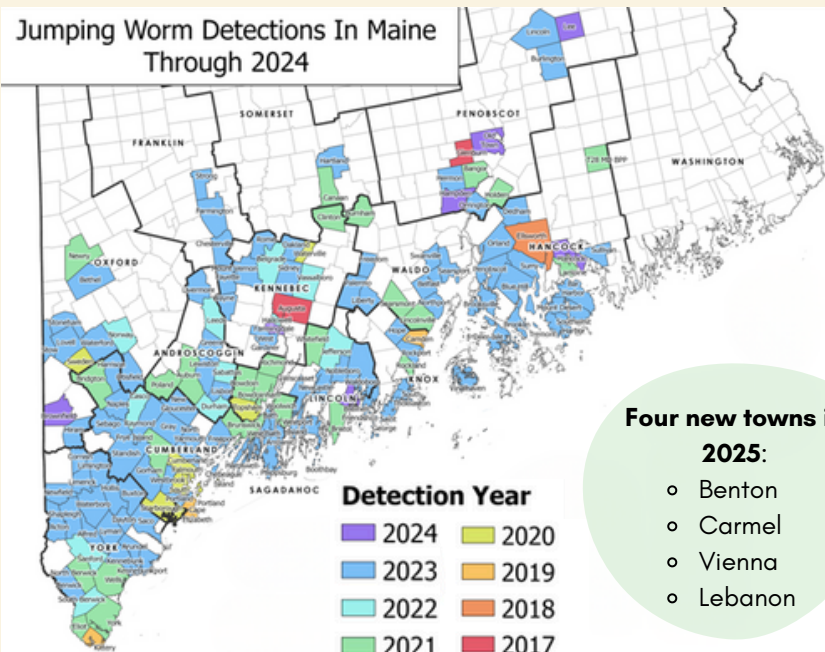
- Dry and loose soils can't support native trees and plants and can lead to erosion



**REDUCED:**

- Soil nutrients & moisture
- Plant diversity
- Healthy tree roots
- Native insects
- Leaf litter
- Supported wildlife
- Disrupted soil may **support invasive plant species** (garlic mustard, Japanese barberry, glossy buckthorn)

Jumping Worm Detections In Maine Through 2024



### Four new towns in 2025:

- Benton
- Carmel
- Vienna
- Lebanon

## Where are they?

- Jumping worms can be found on the **top 3 inches** of soil, leaves, mulched garden beds, crop beds, shaded forests, and newly disturbed areas.
- 90+ new towns in 2023
- 7 new towns in 2024
- Establishing long term monitoring sites

View the 2024 detection map!



# Jumping Worm ID

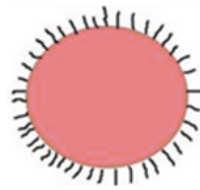
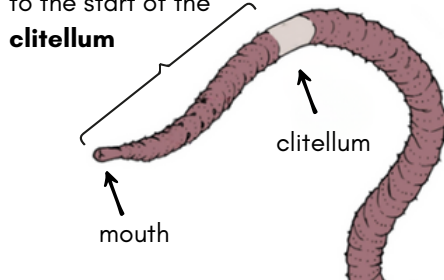
★ Best time to ID jumping worms is after mid-August because that is when most worms will be adults.



1. Clitellum fully **encircles worm** and is found on **segments 14-16**
2. **Bristle-like** hairs



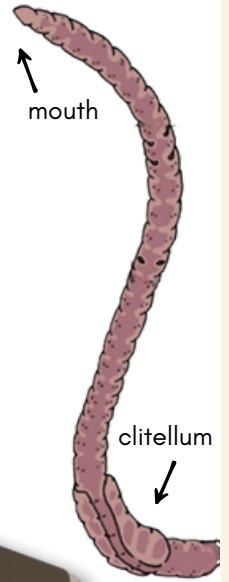
Count from the **mouth** to the start of the **clitellum**



Graphics: Portland State University/Oregon State University

# Common Earthworm ID

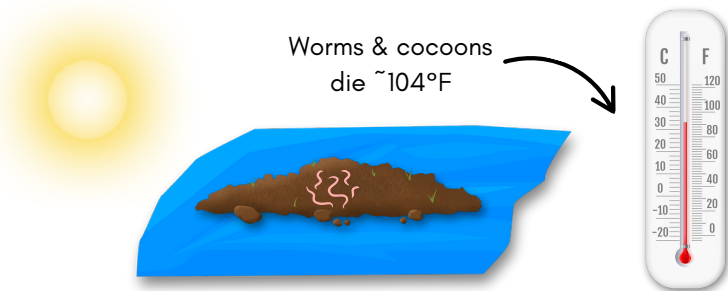
1. Clitellum is **saddle-shaped** and is found on **segments 32-37**
2. **Widely-paired** hairs



★ Young worms do not have a clitellum. A **hand lens** may help you see a worm's *setae* (hairs).

## Management

- ★ Eradication of established populations is not a realistic goal for management
- **No products registered** for treatment of jumping worms in Maine
- **Hand-removal** of adult jumping worms may be effective with smaller infestations
  - Place in soapy water and leave for a few days before disposal
- Tilling soil in May before worms turn into adults may reduce populations



### Solarization:

- Only effective in **summer**
- Lay out thin layer (~6-8 inches) of infested soil onto tarp, cover with clear drop cloth, and secure sides to make a "package"
- Leave out in direct sun for ~3 days

## Prevention

- **Clean soil and debris** from vehicles, gardening equipment, boots, and other gear
- Check soil, compost, and mulch for signs of jumping worms before purchasing
- Ask nurseries if they **heat treat** their soil, mulch, or similar products
- Choose **bare-root plants** over potted when possible

## Report suspected jumping worms!

Take photos of worms when reporting



**Gary Fish**

**Maine State Horticulturist**

[gary.fish@maine.gov](mailto:gary.fish@maine.gov) | 207-287-7545