

The Register-Guard

<http://www.registerguard.com/>

[State to spray for gypsy moths](#)**Neighborhood residents are cautiously accepting the proposal, a spokesman said****BY [MATT COOPER](#)***The Register-Guard*

The gypsy moth has a wingspan of maybe 2 inches, but the brown-and-black bugger is creating quite a dust-up in southeast Eugene.

The state has spotted the tree-threatening invader there and wants to spray insecticide on more than 600 acres around Old Dillard Road from the air this spring. Some in the neighborhood are OK with the plan. But environmental advocates aim to fight what they call an excessive use of insecticides that could harm people, plants and animals.

The state Department of Agriculture calls the gypsy moth a “major pest” responsible for ruining millions of acres. The department found seven of the moths last year in a neighborhood off Old Dillard. And given the moth’s ability to wreak havoc, the department said, that’s seven more than can be allowed anywhere in Oregon.

Between late April and mid-May, the state plans three applications by helicopter of the biological insecticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki*, or Btk, which has an excellent safety record, the department said. In one test, 18 volunteers suffered no illness from swallowing one gram of Btk daily for five days, the department said. The department also offers many other examples of the insecticide’s safety.

But activist groups in locations worldwide have criticized Btk.

The Oregon Toxics Alliance of Eugene said Btk is only one ingredient in a chemical with a worrisome history: Foray 48B, a water-based insecticide of which Btk comprises 17 percent.

Lisa Arkin, executive director of the alliance, pointed to a report by a team of experts in 2007 that found aerial spraying of Foray 48B in urban areas of Auckland, New Zealand, resulted in adverse health effects on people exposed to it.

The report also said “more than 500 people reported a range of health reactions including acute toxicity in Oregon, Washington state and Canada due to the large-scale aerial spraying of Btk, although the U.S. Department of Agriculture claimed no adverse health effects.”

In addition, Foray 48B and Btk were found to have “a myriad of adverse health conditions in targeted communities” by the Saskatchewan Environmental Society and

area residents, in a 2003 report.

Evidence indicated Btk caused “skin rash, other immune, allergic and sensitization responses such as dry, itchy skin; red, burning eyes; dry sore throat; (and) cough and tightness in the chest,” the report said.

The Oregon Toxics Alliance said use of Btk is overkill that will wipe out beneficial insects such as monarch butterflies, and that aerial spray could drift onto property and people outside the target area. California has discontinued similar approaches for pest moths in urban areas, opting for safer methods, the alliance said.

Arkin said trapping is a better approach for the gypsy moth, at least initially, than turning to the most destructive way to take on a tiny number of adversaries. “You wouldn’t use an atom bomb to kill two bank robbers,” Arkin said.

This is not the city’s first go-round with the gypsy moth, the larva of which can eat as much as 1 square foot of leaves per day, killing the tree.

In the early 1980s, the Eugene area experienced the largest gypsy moth infestation found west of the Mississippi, according to the Oregon State University Extension in Corvallis.

More than 100,000 people in the metropolitan and surrounding area were at risk of exposure to insecticides that might be used against the bug. Affected parties eventually ruled out certain insecticides and opted for Bt — a type of *Bacillus thuringiensis* — that was considered acceptable by many in the environmental community.

The infestation was eliminated after four years through trapping, inspections, mating disruptions and the compound, the extension said.

In 2004, the state repeatedly sprayed Btk in the Crest Drive area of south Eugene after finding some gypsy moths there.

Despite the concerns of the toxics alliance, there is “cautious acceptance” of the state’s plan in the neighborhood, said Kevin Matthews, president of the Southeast Neighbors group.

The state met with the neighborhood group last fall, and the gypsy moth was generally viewed as a legitimate exception to the area’s preference for nonpesticide approaches such as volunteer labor, he said.

“Some people who have experienced gypsy moth infestations in other places (gave) personal experiences on how devastating it can be,” Matthews said. “We’re pretty heavily environmentally oriented, but it’s an invasive species and can be devastating to our native species.”

The neighborhood still needs information on spraying dates and safety precautions, he said.

The state said it will provide advance notice of spraying. People should stay indoors during spraying and for at least 30 minutes afterward, unless it is essential to be

outdoors; those with a health concern should talk to a doctor, the state said.

Those whose water originates in local creeks, streams or springs can shut off the intake until the spray has moved downstream, and equipment such as playgrounds or lawn chairs can be covered or hosed down.

GYPSY MOTH

Meeting: State Agriculture Department plans a public meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday at Calvary Fellowship church, 4060 W. Amazon Drive, Eugene

Information: Call (800) 525-0137 or go to egov.oregon.gov/ODA/PLANT/IPPM/index.shtml for a draft of the spray plan

Copyright © 2009 — The Register-Guard, Eugene, Oregon, USA