

Moth

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you?" said A.G. Kawamura, the state's Agricultural and Food Secretary, while addressing a crowd of angry residents. "We're just asking you to trust us."

Many residents, from Scotts Valley to Aptos, however, didn't buy the state's arguments and had a hard time trusting officials with a pesticide whose long-term health effects had not been tested.

Nor did they believe the "declaration of emergency," which the state issued in early October in order to bypass environmental review and start what has become a \$17 million eradication effort.

The state said aerial drops occur on a daily basis in Southern California, where sterile medflies are released from planes in an attempt to combat the Mediterranean fruit fly. Insecticides also are often sprayed over San Diego County to combat pests out that way as well.

"In the L.A. basin, the people are used to it," said Jay Van Rein, a spokesman for the state. "The Central Coast has been very fortunate to have relatively few insect infestations in the first place."

But many Central Coast residents asked why, if the moth had such a voracious appetite and was capable of feeding on some 250 host plants, were the crops still intact in the county?

The state said it was only a matter of time. Officials pointed to Australia and New Zealand, where the bug has wrought millions of dollars in crop damage. They pointed to Hawaii, where permanent quarantines exist on certain plants because of the moth.

They warned that agriculture along the Central Coast could follow suit.

In early November, the city of Santa Cruz and the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors filed lawsuits in an effort to stop the spraying, claiming the federal government violated California's Environmental Quality Act.

In the end, no judge halted the spraying, and on Nov. 8, after numerous court hearings and emotional meetings, including one where sheriff's deputies were summoned, the state sprayed the synthetic pheromone on portions of the county, across a 48-mile radius.

Thousands of gallons of the pheromone were released into the air. The planes could be heard all night by residents.

Though the state repeatedly called it one of the safest eradication efforts ever undertaken, that did little to calm the fears of some residents, who left town before the spraying began.

The state received seven official reports of health problems from county residents after the spraying. That's compared to 44 official reports filed by residents of Monterey County after they were

sprayed earlier this fall. Respiratory problems, such as coughing or shortness of breath, topped the list of complaints, officials said. "Neurologic sensory" issues were next, including complaints of muscle pain or cramping, headache, foul taste or dizziness.

The state also received 117 telephone complaints from Santa Cruz County residents who did not want to leave their name, contact information or details of their symptoms, but those reports cannot be considered official because they are not complete, officials said.

The state plans to continue its efforts in February, said Van Rein, the state spokesman. There's been talk about maybe replacing CheckMate LBAM-F with an alternative spray, he said, adding however nothing is certain yet.

Cities such as San Francisco and Berkeley could be next up, but because the moths are inactive in the winter, the state is still examining its eradication efforts, he said.

"The technical working group will be putting together recommendations," Van Rein added. "Nothing has been decided yet, but obviously any infested area is going to be a part of the plan. We're going to have to do treatments wherever we have infestations. It's just a matter of the availability of the product and when the insects are active."

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