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No new gypsy moths found, officials say

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Sentinel Staff Writer

FELTON — No new gypsy moths have been found here this year, leading state and local agricultural experts to breath easier.

Although officially the state's gypsy moth season this year does not end until Oct. 31, officials say every day that goes by without new finds is good news.

John Connell, area spray manager of the Felton Eradication Program that was instigated by the California

Department of Food and Agriculture earlier this spring, told The Sentinel this morning that finding no new moths "is a good indication that the problems are on the way toward being solved."

Added Santa Cruz County Agricultural Biologist Rick Bergman, "Ever since the first of August, every day that goes by without any moths decreases the likelihood of new hatches."

It was July, 1984, when six of the tree-eating moths were trapped in downtown Felton, prompting an "infestation" to be called by the state. After a legal battle over the pesticide carbaryl, a 250-acre area was subsequently sprayed this spring with the non-chemical bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis*. A quarantine was also established, making it illegal to take gypsy moth-host materials out of the area without an inspection.

It is the moth's hairy caterpillar that has the potential for widespread defoliation of forested areas. They are known to attack everything from

redwood trees to fruits and vegetables. More than 10,000 acres in Oregon were infested by the voracious moths last year.

The gypsy moth season runs May 1 through Oct. 31, according to Connell. The state will not declare an area eradicated, however, until two years of no finds. Thus, Oct. 31, 1986, is the official eradication date for Felton.

"We're real glad we've gotten this far with no new moths," said Connell. Added Bergman, "I'm breathing easier already."

Both Connell and Bergman agreed that late July is the usual time locally where new moths will usually emerge. Although none have hatched in Felton, 28 have hatched this summer throughout the state including three in San Jose.

Connell added that even if one or even several moths are found in Felton, it wouldn't necessarily mean an "infestation" would be declared. That depends on where they are found and the circumstances surrounding the finds. No new infesta-

tions have been called by the state this year.

Bergman clarified that a little "detective work" has uncovered what they believe to be was the source of last July's moths in Felton. He said the moths are thought to have hitchhiked on timber imported from Eugene, Ore., which was used to rebuild and expand Fall Creek Bridge on Highway 9.

Court rep

Superior Court Judge Chris Cottle

Alan Glen Smith, Watsonville, was sentenced to a year in County Jail and five years probation after pleading guilty to a charge of assault with a deadly weapon with an allegation of personal use of a firearm.

He was accused of firing a shotgun during an argument with another man, and hitting a woman with whom both men had been involved, according to probation reports.