

# Local growers discuss apple moth approach

## Final recommendations expected by the end of the week

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To bring attention to the plight of Santa Cruz County nurseries in the wake of the appearance of the invasive light brown apple moth, several local growers met with California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary A.G. Kawamura and Sen. Abel Maldonado in Sacramento Monday.

For Dave Cavanaugh, of Watsonville wholesale nursery Cavanaugh Color, the goal was to let officials know what is happening on the ground to control the pest, which has caused millions of dollars of damage to plants in Australia and New Zealand before it was first spotted in California in

*Light Brown Apple moth*

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March.

That meant explaining nontoxic approaches nurseries use to control other invasive pests, asking for more information to funnel to the local level and advocating for more nontoxic alternatives, Cavanaugh said.

Growers are also concerned with the way inspectors can shut down nurseries at any time, although Ca-

vanaugh said it is nearly impossible to determine in the field whether eggs actually belong to the light brown apple moth.

"They're erring on the side of caution — that's not good enough for us," he said. "Were going to have to fight this thing."

In the wake of a federal quarantine in eight California counties that re-

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stricts the movement of nursery products from crossing state lines, growers also want to see retail nurseries handled differently than other nurseries because they distribute products locally but are still subject to the same requirements as out-of-state distributors.

According to Santa Cruz County Agricultural Commissioner Ken Corbishley, local nurseries have lost an estimated \$400,000 from lost sales and closures since the moth came to town. Nurseries have rarely had to undertake regular pest treatment programs, but the cost of preventive treatments is also rising, he said.

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Associated Press file

This undated photo provided by the California Department of Food and Agriculture shows a light brown apple moth. Agriculture officials are scrambling to contain the invasion of the voracious Australian pest spotted in the San Francisco Bay area in February.