

# Gypsy moths found

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FELTON — Three male gypsy moths were discovered in traps in the Fall Creek Park area Wednesday and Thursday, and a fourth may have been found on Friday.

County Agricultural Commissioner Dave Moeller downplayed the discovery, saying that a destructive infestation of European gypsy moths takes years to develop.

"Time is on our side," Moeller said. "It's not anything to be alarmed about at this time."

After the first moth was discovered Wednesday in a trap on Felton-Empire Road, about 51 additional traps were placed within a four-square-mile area.

On Thursday, a crew checking the regular traps on Fall Creek Road found the second and third moths. Each was identified as a gypsy moth by a state Department of Food and Agriculture lab. About 15 additional traps were placed in the vicinity, Moeller said.

The fourth moth, discovered Friday in the same area, has not been confirmed as a gypsy moth.

Moeller said if more moths are found, additional traps will be set. He said that any thought of using pesticides to battle the infestation is premature.

"Because the female doesn't fly, each successive generation that may be produced doesn't move very far," Moeller said. "What typically happens is you get a few moths in an isolated area and that's the extent of it."

Moeller said if several more moths are found, workers may conduct a property-by-property search for an "egg mass," or other gypsy-moth remnants, such as empty cocoons.

"It's a real tedious hunt, but it can pay off," Moeller said. "We have the advantage of time."

If adult gypsy moths are breeding, the egg masses they create take several months to develop, Moeller said, so any further action won't be necessary until next spring.

Moeller said it's the European gypsy moth that's typically found in California. The more destructive Asian gypsy moth has been found in the Pacific Northwest, but not here. It will take several weeks of DNA testing in Sacramento to confirm what kind of gypsy moth has been trapped.

Gypsy moths have been common in the eastern portion of the United States for more than a century, but only occasional "hitchhikers" show up west of the Mississippi, Moeller said.