



If we were to find any scientifically recognized anomalies with the spray, that would be sufficient for us to halt and do a review. We are working with other agencies—the California EPA, Fish & Game, and the state Department of Health—to make sure we're aware of everything related to the spray.

—Secretary of CDFA A.G. Kawamura, March 18, 2008.

These microencapsulated biochemical pheromone pesticides are new. Many people have reported adverse reactions to the pesticide. Since this product has been granted an emergency exception, no long-term tests or studies have been conducted concerning health effects.

—Brochure from LBAMspray.com

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"People are not attached to agriculture, and barely attached to the environment," he says. "There are counties where we're welcomed with open arms. People either don't remember, or need better education on, why we need to keep these pests out of the food supply." He refers not only to past eradication efforts, but other ongoing ones—13 different species are targeted for elimination right now.

Kawamura sees the use of the Checkmate pheromone spray as a huge step toward more environmentally sound eradication plans. "Citizens have long asked for more benign tools," he says. "This represents a tremendous movement in that direction. We could set a global benchmark for alternative methods to DDT. We need the environmentalists to understand what we're doing, and be on board with pest eradication. What will they say when it's something that attacks the redwoods? Will it be OK to spray pheromones then?"

Kawamura speaks

with a calm and measured voice; his face betrays little emotion. Still, there is an undercurrent of frustration in his choice of words when he says, "Tolerating this application today saves a tremendous amount of pesticides in the future."

Indeed, aside from the 647 health complaints lodged after last November's spray, there's little on the scientific record to suggest that Checkmate is hazardous to humans or the environment. It seems that the method—spraying chemicals from airplanes—is dictating the fear. Once fear takes hold, even the benign becomes monstrous.

From a list of facts released by LBAMspray.com: "Checkmate product labels state that they are 'biochemical'; Checkmate is a pesticide by the EPA's own definition." The same could be said about Diet

Coke, which contains 'biochemical' ingredients and can be used to kill ants, thus making it a pesticide.

From a pamphlet disseminated by CASS: "The UC Davis study of samples collected during the Fall 2007 spray showed microcapsules as small as 10 microns, a particulate size the American Lung Association says can harm lungs." The study listed 10 microns as the smallest boundary of the microcapsule size (the largest being 190 microns), and the ALA states dangerous particles include anything 10 microns or smaller. Examples of particles smaller than 10 microns include dust, soot and car exhaust. If Checkmate has an adverse effect on the human lung, it's minuscule compared to everyday human activity.

And because no controversial issue regarding government action can go forward without a certain amount of paranoia, here's an excerpt from an e-mail sent by Steve Jones: "The current statewide campaign to eradi-