

Moth

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The department is keeping tabs on research in New Zealand on products that last longer than CheckMate OLR-F and CheckMate LBAM-F, which were used on the Central Coast last fall.

"We're looking for something that lasts longer than 30 days in the environment," Lyle said.

The department likely will make a decision around April about what product it will use, Lyle said.

No decision has been made about whether to use two other possible treatments in Santa Cruz County, one a method that uses pheromone-infused twist ties applied to utility poles and trees and another that calls for hand-held spraying of plants and trees with a substance called *Bacillus thuringiensis*, or Bt.

Assemblyman John Laird, D-Santa Cruz, echoed concerns he expressed last month on the issue, namely that an environmental report on the program is now more than a month overdue. Laird also said at the time the new alternatives need to be vetted with the public.

The state's announcement comes the same week a coalition of eight environmental and health groups called upon the Department of Food and Agriculture to eliminate the use of aerial treatments.

"We respectfully urge you to lead the CDFA in the right direction by placing a moratorium on further aerial pesticide applications, and modify the program to use the least-toxic option," the groups said in a letter to Ag Secretary A.G. Kawamura.

Santa Cruz resident Roy Upton of the group Citizens for Health, one of those groups, said public pressure and court action are likely the only way to stop the CDFA from spraying.

"They're not going to take it upon themselves to stop unless there is enough legal and public pressure to stop it," Upton said.

Most of the public pressure has been on the state level, but Upton said the moth-eradication plan is backed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the fight against it needs to be waged on the federal level as well.

"We as a constituency have not turned it into a federal problem yet," he said.

The spraying that occurred in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties last fall sparked outcry, leading to lawsuits and complaints from some residents who said they were sickened by the aerial spraying. The state Department of Food and Agriculture received 330 illness reports after the moth-spraying program began. Hundreds more were contained in a report by a group called the California Alliance to Stop the Spray.

The state and federal agriculture departments say eradicating the moth is crucial to protecting the state's agriculture industry. The ag industry in Santa Cruz County alone was worth \$414 million in 2006.

One of the two lawsuits was filed by Santa Cruz County, which seeks an environmental review report before spraying commences again.

The Santa Cruz City Council passed a resolution Tuesday opposing the aerial spraying.

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