

County residents startled by low-flying planes, pesticide

Light Brown Apple Moth

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SANTA CRUZ — While neighbors exchanged tales about planes buzzing overhead and mothers wondered what precautions to take for their kids, state officials Friday night were reviewing the progress of their aerial spraying efforts in Santa Cruz County and likely will announce today that their work here is over — at least for now.

"We got a lot done in Santa Cruz," said Nancy Lungren, a spokeswoman for the Department of Food and Agriculture, which is in the infancy of a three-year program to prevent the spread of the light brown apple moth.

"Judging from our progress, Friday will likely be the last night," she said Friday.

The state, however, may have to do some more spraying in Salinas and Prunedale tonight, Lungren said.

After fog grounded planes and delayed spraying efforts most of the week, state officials seized on clear skies to apply a much-discussed pesticide over coastal areas between Santa Cruz and Aptos including parts of Scotts Valley on Thursday and less populated inland areas and parts of Monterey County on Friday.

But not to the pleasure of all. If it wasn't concern about the pesticide's safety, which has sparked at least three lawsuits and dozens of protests, it was the hum of three planes flying from 8 p.m. into the early morning hours Thursday and Friday that had residents a little rattled.

"It felt like World War II or something," said Hilary Hultzen, who is

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staying in a truck trailer outside her brother's home on Santa Cruz's Westside.

"We're all a little freaked out," she said.

Farther south, Soquel resident Akin Babatola said he was restless,

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State public outreach and response programs

■ A Web site with information about the moth can be found at www.cdffa.ca.gov/LBAM. Those interested in receiving e-mail updates can subscribe at the Web site.

■ An e-mail and phone hot line to log health complaints to be monitored daily at LBAM@cdffa.ca.gov, (800) 491-1899 ext. 0. The hot line will log health complaints, which will be compiled and analyzed by a medical toxicologist.

■ Fact sheets addressing health and science issues are being developed for distribution and posting on the Web site.

■ Aerial treatment maps will be posted on the Web site showing the previous night's spray path.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Hilary Hultzen thought she 'was in a war zone' Thursday night when state planes buzzed the Westside repeatedly, spraying light brown apple moth pesticide over the RV in which she's staying.