

release of sterile male moths would cause population collapse.

The CDEA points to success in controlling the pink bollworm with a similar program as an example.

"Theoretically it sounds great, but it really hasn't been very effective," countered Hardy. "Only under certain circumstances, and always in connection with other tools."

James Carey, a professor of entomology at UC Davis, is another frequently quoted source on the LBAM and the efficacy of a sterile moth release program.

He said that billions of treated moths would be

"It's one strike and you're out... The challenge is that the pest is a moth that flies in and out throughout the valley. We can only treat our own ranch, not our neighbor's."

*~John Eiskamp,
Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau president*

needed per week to provide a sufficient "overflooding ratio" in infested areas, probably in perpetuity. Technicians would then have to put each captured moth individually under a microscope to be checked, a daunting logistical task.

Should Nature Take Its Course?

To some extent, Hardy believes in letting nature take its course.

The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service says that the apple moths "have no known predators or parasites here to reduce populations naturally."

Not so, says Hardy. He pointed out that, even though no native predator

had followed the moth over on its journey from Australia, there were plenty of opportunistic local predators which have welcomed the exotic free lunch. He said that when LBAM cocoons are opened, he often finds that a lot of larvae have already be parasitized.

"Sometimes you open up a rolled leaf expecting a larva and instead find a spider or a wasp," he said. He also has seen bushes with leafroller activity that two weeks later have an exploded spider population because of the food source. He pointed to a CDEA-funded study at Berkeley that found 13 parasitoids in California that feed on the LBAM.

Hardy, Eiskamp and Cavanaugh all believe that rather than hunting for the right super-weapon against the bug or arguing endlessly about statistics, what is needed is a fundamental reassessment of

our attitude towards the light brown apple moth.

Should Moth by Designated Pest?

The CDEA designates the LBAM as a Class A pest, which means it does not occur elsewhere in the U.S., and if it becomes established it will have severe impact on the agricultural industry. It is that latter point that the three men take exception to.

Cavanaugh, the nursery owner, says that for him aphids and red spiders are bigger pests than the apple moth. For grape growers, the glassy-winged sharpshooter is far more devastating.

"The grape growers have already signed off on the fact that they feel they can control the LBAM much like any other