

Moths

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wildlife, as well as the ecological impacts on our ecosystems and watersheds, need further evaluation."

The board has revisited the subject many times since announcing its original stance in August, said Peggy Miers, California Certified Organic Farmers executive director.

"I think every one of us is learning more every day," Miers said. "A lot has changed in the last several months. We've been hearing more concerns about the spraying."

The state Department of Food and Agriculture said it took into account organic standards when it chose the synthetic pheromone to fight the pest, which the organic group supported at the time.

"When CDFG and the USDA chose CheckMate moth pheromone last year for aerial treatment of

the light brown apple moth, great care was taken to secure a formulation that would not endanger the organic certifications of growers," the state ag department said in a statement. "The California Certified Organic Farmers endorsed the program at that time. We believe that was the correct decision."

California Certified Organic Farmers said Monday it remains concerned about the threat posed by the apple moth, supports using ground applications of pheromones and urged the state to pursue a diverse approach.

At the same time, the group stressed the importance of alleviating the concerns of trading partners so that embargoes and quarantines on California-grown products can be overcome.

"The biggest concern our membership has are quarantines and the ability to move product," Miers said.

Santa Cruz and Monterey are among the counties under a state- and federal-ordered quarantine of certain products, said county Agriculture Com-

missioner Ken Corbishley.

That quarantine means some growers must either get a certification of being moth free or, in some cases, follow a rigorous inspection and treatment program of ensuring their crops and the areas around them are free of the pest.

The Sacramento protest came as a group of cities, including Santa Cruz, announced they were forming the Coalition of California Cities to Stop the Spray aimed at halting the aerial spraying approach.

"We didn't consent to being sprayed," said Santa Cruz Councilman Tony Madrigal, who attended the coalition's press conference in Sacramento. "As long as there is the prospect of being sprayed, our communities are going to be concerned and therefore we're going to unite."

The state used aerial spraying of a synthetic pheromone over Santa Cruz and Monterey counties last fall in its bid to eradicate the pest. The pheromone doesn't kill the moth, but confuses the moth's mating process.

After the spray, hundreds of people in the region reported being sickened. The state plans to spray again in June and expand to other parts of the Bay Area later in the summer. It also is considering supplemental approaches, such as a stingerless wasp and ground-based application of the pheromone.

The California Department of Agriculture contends eradicating the pest is necessary to protect the state's agriculture industry and its ability to export crops.

A report issued last week contends aerial spraying is not effective in widespread areas where topography varies.

That report by Daniel Harder of the UC Santa Cruz Arboretum and Jeff Rosendale, a Watsonville grower and horticultural consultant, was based on research in New Zealand where the moth has been for more than a century.

Contact Brian Seals at 706-3264 or bseals@santacruzsentinel.com.