

# MOTHS

From page 1

could be there for five more years.

In the meantime, the local agricultural industry is learning to deal with the problem and the state and federal regulations that accompany the moth.

Representatives from the local Ag community continue to meet with USDA and CDFA officials to work out ways to meet regulations and remain in business. Thankfully, the region's biggest cash crop — strawberries — are not very susceptible to the moth.

Carolyn O'Donnell, issues and food safety manager for the California Strawberry Commission, said her industry met with officials immediately and forged an agreement that inspections would be done at packing sites, making the process quick enough that the berries wouldn't spoil and efficient enough that the product's safety could be vouched for.

Hawkins said that since the moth does not bother the berries, inspectors at the packing facilities primarily only have to make sure there is very little leaf debris in the product.

"The light brown apple moth has had a very small impact," said O'Donnell. "But strawberries are very low risk for the light brown apple moth."

At much higher risk are nursery plants and local nurseries have all had a much tougher time dealing with the moth issue. Local nursery owners were immediately hit with harsh regulations restricting the movement of plants and requiring spraying of the harsh pesticide chlorpyrifos.

"We required that because it is the only chemical available that would kill all stages of the light brown apple moth," said Hawkins.

But now alternatives have been offered. Growers can use Bt, which only kills the caterpillar stage, and then quarantine the plants until all later life cycles would have died off. The USDA is also allowing freer movement of plants in local markets.

And the local industry is still working with the CDFA and the USDA to ease regulation a little more and custom fit the rules to the type of business, rather than making blanket rules that apply to everybody.

"They put these protocol in place that were virtually impossible for the entire industry to adhere to. Because its such a diverse industry, blanket regulations are not really appropriate," said Dave Cavanaugh, who runs a wholesale nursery on Webb Road, Cavanaugh Color.

Cavanaugh, who has his workers inspect his plants every week, said no moths have been found on his property, but the issue has cost him about