

✓ ~~Felton~~ Gypsy Moth

Aerial spraying begins Saturday

By KEITH MURAOKA

Sentinel Staff Writer

FELTON — Residents here may be awakened Saturday by the whop-whop whirl of a gypsy moth spray helicopter as the state starts its battle against the tree-eating insect.

A single California Department of Food and Agriculture helicopter will aerially spray the non-chemical bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* over 250 acres around downtown Felton beginning at daybreak Saturday.

The spraying is expected to be completed by 8 a.m., according to Donna Daniels, associate economic entomologist with the state department in Campbell. The spraying will only take place "weather permitting," she said, meaning rain or high winds will be cause for postponement.

The spray material, also known as B.t., is favored by the county and many residents of Felton, particularly when compared to the insecticide carbaryl. Thus far, the county and residents have successfully fought off state plans to combine B.t. with ground spraying of carbaryl, a toxic chemical sold over-the-counter as Sevin.

As of press time today, the Sixth District Court of Appeals in San Jose had not ruled on the state's emergency request for permission to utilize carbaryl in Felton.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture filed the emergency writ Tuesday, asking for a stay of a Santa Cruz County Superior Court decision last week prohibiting ground spraying of carbaryl in Felton. The county and other co-plaintiffs filed their response this morning.

No matter what that appellate ruling might be, however, the state has scheduled four-to-six aerial applications of B.t. each Saturday morning, weather permitting. Those with questions as to whether the spraying will take place or not can call the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Campbell office (collect) at 370-1218.

The 250-acre treatment area forms a rough square around downtown Felton. The northernmost boundary is the intersection of Farmer

A single California Department of Food and Agriculture helicopter will aerially spray the non-chemical bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* over 250 acres around downtown Felton beginning at daybreak Saturday.

and Cooper streets, with Laurel Drive to the south. The eastern-most point is the east intersection of Graham Hill and Covered Bridges roads. The Zayante Rancho border is the western border of the spray area.

Daniels recommended residents "use common sense" while the spraying takes place. She recommended they attempt to stay out of line of the spray even though it is non-toxic.

Daniels reiterated that B.t. does not harm humans, animals and even many insects, such as bees. Its bacterium essentially reacts only on caterpillars. It clogs gypsy moth caterpillars' digestive tracts and they starve to death.

B.t. spraying is necessary "since the biological clock is ticking and there's no time to waste," added California Department of Food and Agriculture spokeswoman Mary Brown.

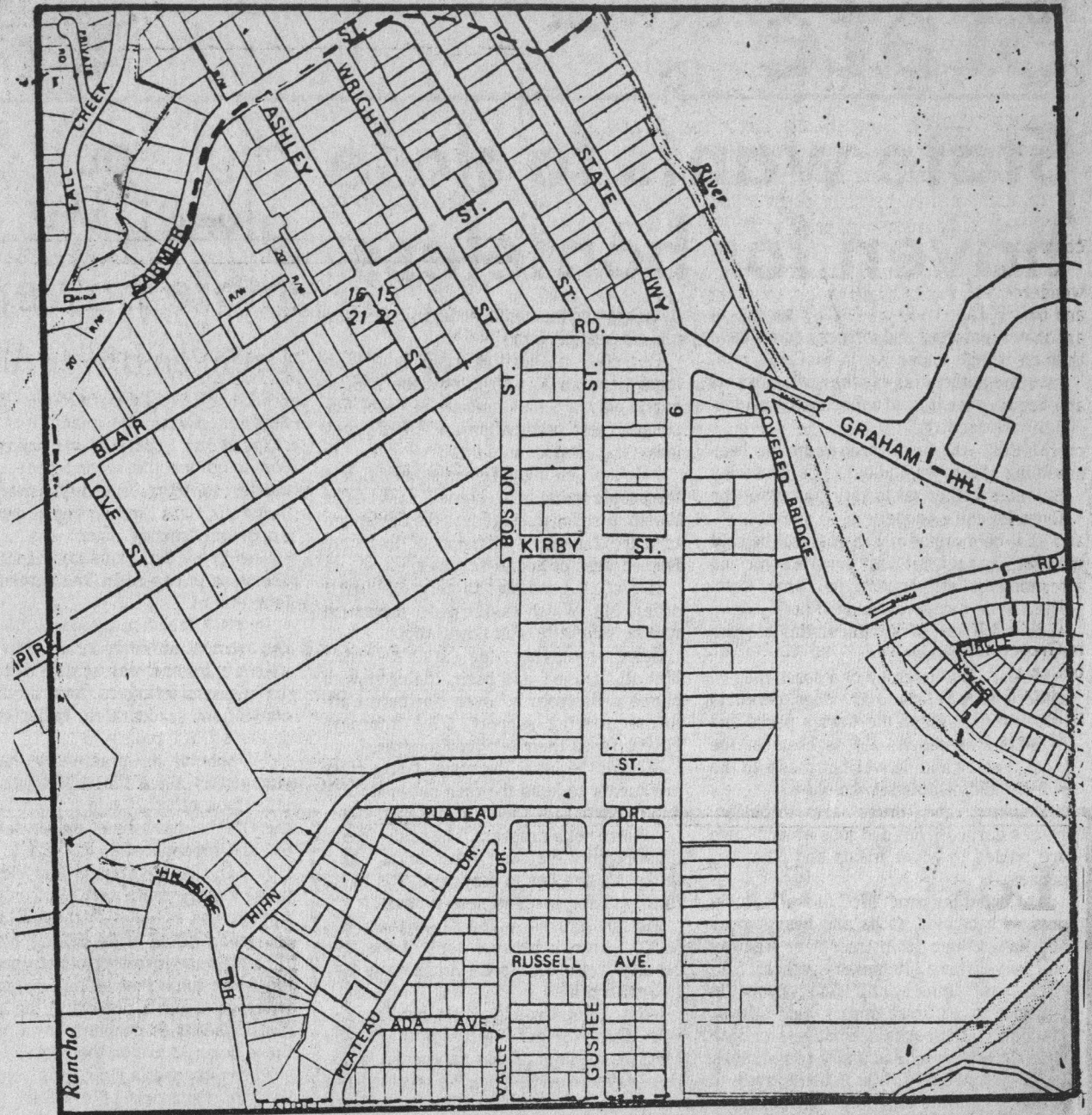
Voracious gypsy moth caterpillars, which have the potential for widespread defoliation of forested areas, are expected to begin hatching in Felton any time.

Brown said the state is still hopeful the appellate court will rule in its favor allowing a combination carbaryl/B.t. eradication program. But, in the meantime, she added, "We had to do something."

The state has successfully used a combination spray program to eradicate the gypsy moth at 10 sites in six California counties. Only two infestations remain — Felton and Fremont. Carbaryl presently is being ground sprayed in Fremont.

The three appellate court justices have the option of making a ruling based on review of material filed by both the county and state. They also can call for a formal hearing.

The appellate court is being asked to rule whether carbaryl is safe. Visiting Santa Cruz County Superior Court Judge Ralph Drummond last week ruled that the state had not met the requirement to be "reasonably certain" that no injury would result from carbaryl. Instead, he ordered the use of B.t.



Map shows area of Felton scheduled for aerial spraying Saturday morning.