

APPLE MOTH

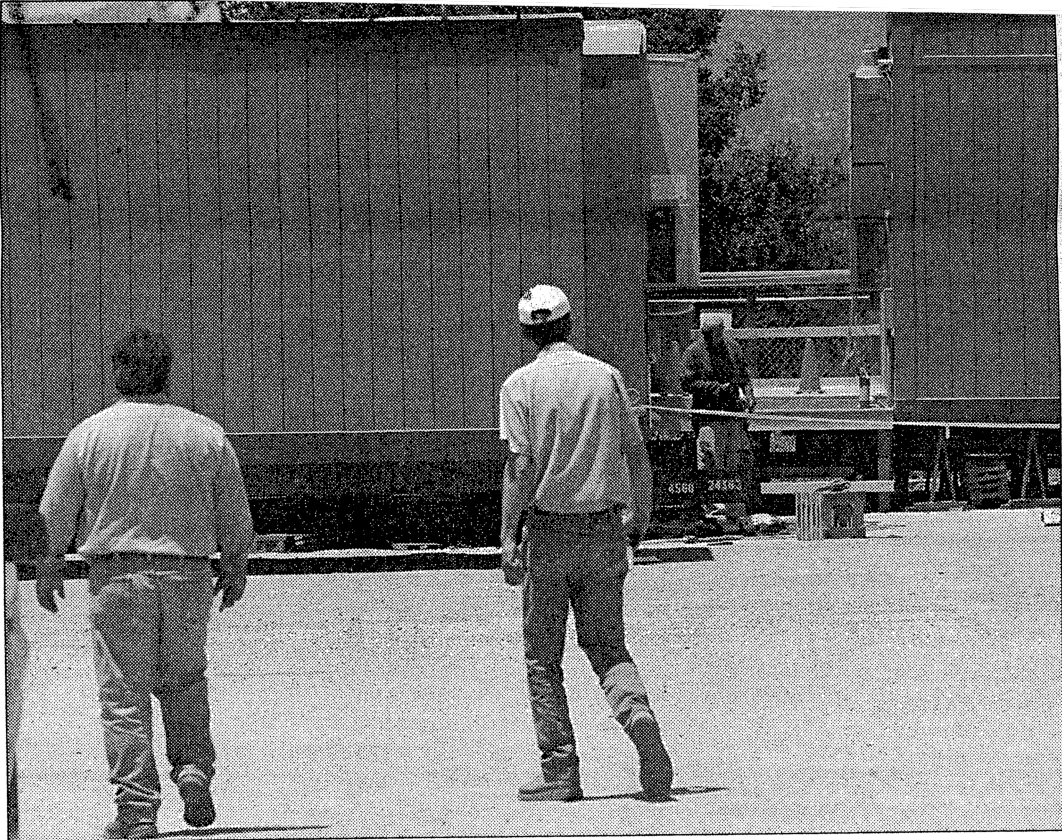
From page 1

As growers work to step up support for Santa Cruz County nurseries, work continues in a busy command center for the light brown apple moth, housed in a remote corner of the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds on East Lake Avenue. In modular units surrounded by barbed wire fences, more than 100 state and federal officials are now working on farm inspections, trapping and eradication measures.

The operation may be in place for months or even years, according to Larry Hawkins, public affairs specialist with the USDA.

The California Department of Agriculture estimates that, if left uncontrolled, moths could cause \$133 million in damage to crops and the spiraling cost of controlling the pests. The moths are native to Australia, and have spread to New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Ireland, New Caledonia and Hawaii.

Since March, moths have been spotted in eight counties and a federal quarantine was put in place to prevent them from heading across state boundaries. As of this week, 3,609 moths have been trapped in the eight regulated counties in California, with 3,070, or 92 percent, of them found in south-



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Modular trailers and a fenced-in staging area have been set up at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds for the light brown apple moth project.

ern Santa Cruz and northern Monterey County, Hawkins said. In Santa Cruz County, 28 growers have been inspected for moths.

Within the next week, officials are expecting the final recommendations from a panel of technical experts charged with determining survey methods and eradication techniques to

control the spread of the invasive light brown apple moth before it wreaks havoc on California plants.

Draft recommendations advised using "whatever materials are available" to eradicate moths, including the toxic chemical Dursban, Hawkins said. While other less toxic chemicals, such as spinosad or *Bacillus thuringiensis*, can be sprayed to eliminate adults, only Dursban has proven success at eliminating all life stages — from larvae to worm to adults, he said. The panel also recommended disrupting mating patterns of moths with synthetic pheromones and mass trapping, Hawkins said.

Cavanaugh and others hope to find alternatives to chemicals as soon as possible. Not only can plants be damaged by Dursban, but non-chemical, organic approaches, like fungi, underway at nurseries can be jeopardized.

"We wish (the panel) would never had said eradication — that means zero tolerance," he said. "We would prefer it be

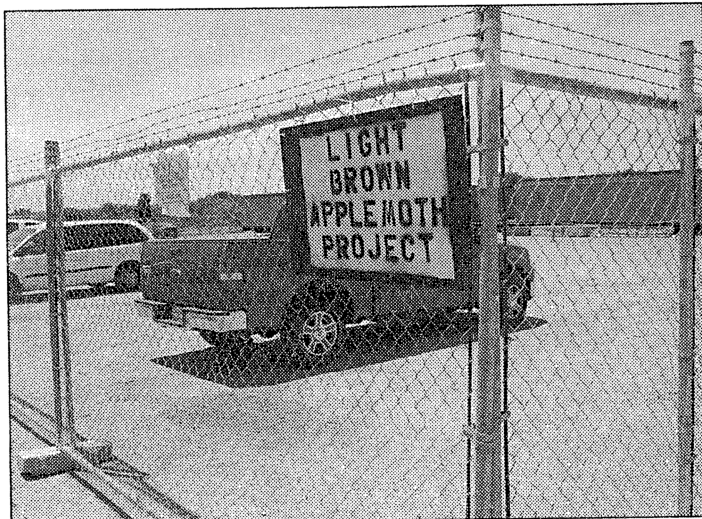
controlled like any other pest we have in the nursery."

In parts of Soquel particularly hard-hit by the moth, Corbishley said the CDFA is trying innovative approaches like capturing male moths and adding pheromone strips to encourage mating disruption. Officials are also looking to develop a colony experiment with biological predators, he said.

"When you have a bunch of strips in high numbers, the males get confused and may give up," he said.

For now, USDA and CDFA officials are working with nurseries to identify other treatments. Hawkins added that moths have been spotted in residential or rural sites, making a one-size-fits-all approach tough.

"It's not likely that a single approach to dealing with the pest would be appropriate," he said. "We're going to have to do what's necessary to get rid of the pest — we'll do it in whatever way minimizes the negative environmental consequences there might be."



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A barbed wire topped fence surrounds the light brown apple moth project.