

Spray

Continued from Page A1

they have much faith in the safety of malathion, a conventional insecticide that targeted the fruit fly, which lays eggs on apples and oranges and some 200 other fruits and vegetables. It's capable of turning a normal piece of fruit into one that's laden with larvae.

Vehicle checkpoints were set up around the county to make sure fruit never crossed county lines in a scene that is still used to demonstrate the seriousness of the quarantine. Yet in some parts of the county there were very few medflies, if any, and very little proof of damage, according to former apple farmers who nonetheless suffered the fallout over the state and federal quarantines.

The spraying of malathion, the state insisted, had to be carried out — the same sort of thinking that's bringing itself to bear today.

And for those residents who didn't worry about the health effects of the spraying, they worried about the effect it was going to have on their cars, says Bill Ringe, a former apple grower and current Watsonville resident who remembers "the malathion days."

"The greatest concern was that the malathion was going to corrode the paint on their cars — forget about what it was going to do to them personally," said Ringe, whose job at the time was to board the helicopters and point out to the pilots the apple orchards in the mountains.

"The pilot and I were always afraid we'd stumble upon some marijuana field, and we'd get shot down," Ringe said. "I'm not kidding. There were people living in teepees with no roads to them."

Some things change ...

Nowadays, marijuana can be smoked legally if you have a medical marijuana card. And it's not malathion laced with a sweet molasses that's being sprayed but a synthetic pheromone — a mostly water-based solution that confuses the male moth by mimicking the scent of a female moth, ultimately disrupting the mating process.

Although the state Department of Food and Agriculture says the pheromone, CheckMate LBAM-F, doesn't kill the moths but merely disorients them, many of the opponents of the spraying say that's no reason to trust it.

"There's got to be something in it that's awfully powerful to cause a moth to flutter from one tree to another in search of a mate that's not actually there," says Lori Cioffi, who insists that if the state continues spraying the region until 2010, which is the plan, then she's

Light brown apple moth spraying

WHERE: Scotts Valley, Santa Cruz, Capitola, Live Oak, Soquel, Aptos, Las Lomas, Aromas, Prunedale and Salinas.

WHEN: 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. today through Friday [Spraying in Santa Cruz County isn't slated to begin until Monday at the earliest.]

WHY: Control breeding of light brown apple moth.

COST: \$2.7 million.

INFORMATION: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/ea/downloads/lbam_ea_sc.pdf. The city of Santa Cruz Web site also has information about the plan. **SOURCE:** California Department of Agriculture

definitely going to move either inland or out of state.

And people like Annie Spurgeon of Live Oak and Teyara and Andrew Hardy of Santa Cruz could be following right behind.

"I have a 2-year-old child that I've got to worry about," said Hardy as she held up her son outside a Santa Cruz courtroom after a ruling about the spray Thursday. There, Superior Court Judge Paul Burdick ruled attorneys for Santa Cruz County, who were trying to get a temporary injunction against the spraying, failed to meet their burden of proof that the pesticide would harm the public and the environment.

Same ill feelings

If there is any drastic difference between the Mediterranean fruit fly of two decades ago and the light brown apple moth, it's that this time around there have been legal challenges, lawsuits filed and resolutions passed opposing the state's attempts to eradicate the moth, something that didn't occur in the 1980s. The medfly resurfaced in nearby Santa Clara County in August as well as in Southern California, prompting an eradication program that includes pheromones.

But the same sort of ill feelings toward the state have prevailed this time around — namely, that the fruit fly wasn't as dangerous as it was made out to be by the state. It's a similar argument being made in the case of the light brown apple moth, whose voracious appetite and capability for destruction have so far not surfaced in Santa Cruz County, the most infested region in the state, with more than 8,700 moths trapped here.

Whether the state's declaration of emergency was enough to forgo an environmental impact report on the spraying will be the subject of litigation in Santa Cruz and



Dan Coyro/Sentinel file

Some county residents chose to be bused to shelters outside the county rather than stay in town during aerial malathion spraying in 1981 when the county was threatened by the Mediterranean fruit fly.

Monterey counties, where lawsuits by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors and a Carmel environmental group, respectively, will play out.

Both parties contend there is no emergency regarding the light brown apple moth, at least not enough of a problem to warrant planes flying overhead and pesticides being sprayed on the populace without first conducting an environmental assessment.

As Raymond Emme, a Santa Cruz resident, said in a public hearing recently, "When a woman gets breast cancer, doctors don't go in and perform a double mastectomy. They perform the most least invasive procedure, then go

from there. Why isn't the state doing the same?"

Why no alternatives?

Many residents think twist ties — hand-applied pheromones that have been used in apple orchards for decades — might do the trick.

Some have asked the state why it doesn't simply use "sticky traps," the contraptions that are currently catching the moths on a daily basis to monitor their numbers. In Santa Cruz County, the traps line Soquel-San Jose Road that leads up to Summit Road.

But the state insists the region of infestation is just too vast, and that the moths can be found in 11 counties on the Central Coast