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September 26, 2007

# State to spray Santa Cruz County in bid to eradicate apple moth

**BY TOM RAGAN**  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

In early November and mostly in the dead of night, three state-owned airplanes will spray a synthetic scent of female moths across parts of Santa Cruz County and North Monterey County for six straight days, the California Department of Food and Agriculture said Tuesday.

It's the latest attempt to kill the light brown apple moth, whose voracious appetite is capable of causing millions of dollars of damage to California's crops, though to date it has not lived up to its reputation — at least not locally.

State agriculture officials, however, say the moth, detected so far in 11 counties along the Central Coast and Northern California, is capable of

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causing an estimated \$160 million to \$640 million in crop damage and the costs associated with controlling its spread per year.

As a result, the state has its sights set on the most heavily infested areas: Soquel, Live Oak, Santa Cruz, Capitola, Aptos, Scotts Valley, Las Lomas, Aromas, Prunedale and Salinas, said Steve Lyle, a spokesman with the state Department of Food and Agriculture in Sacramento.

Eighty-seven percent of all the moths trapped across the state have been in those areas.

The plan is to confuse the moths by spraying what essentially is a scent of a female moth in the form of a synthetic pheromone. Odorless to humans, the scent confuses the male moths. They follow it and lose track of the real female moths, thereby disrupting the mating cycle.

"We're talking about a synthetic pheromone that's odorless and has been used for over a decade in Australia — with no reports of adverse health or environmental effects," said Lyle. "This spray doesn't even hurt the moths. It just confuses them to the point where analysis causes paralysis and they don't know where to fly or how to find the real female moths"

During the next few weeks, public hearings will be announced to inform residents and answer any questions about the six-day, \$2.7 million project, which will use a trio of King Air Twin Turbine airplanes that have been retrofitted for spraying.

The spraying, conducted 500 to 700 feet in the air, is scheduled to start on Nov. 4 and end Nov. 9 — between the hours of 8 p.m. and 5 a.m.

Although the spray, technically known as Check Mate LBAM-F, has been deemed harmless by the state, it has not come without controversy.

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In Monterey County, where similar aerial spraying was carried out earlier this month, concerned citizens showed up in droves to public hearings to protest — but to no avail.

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And it's doubtful that any sort of opposition will change the state's course of action in Santa Cruz County, Lyle said.

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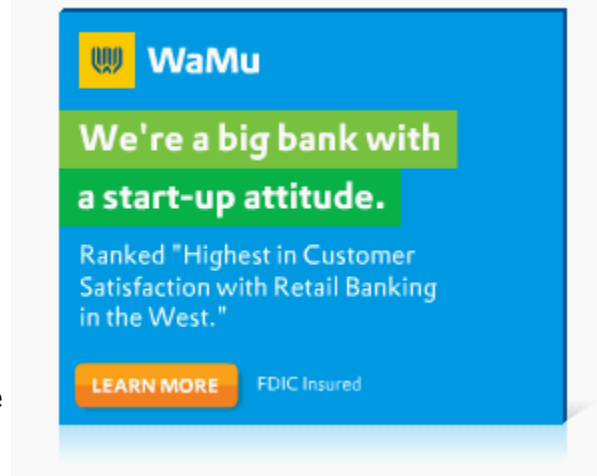
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"The authority rests with the state," he added. "There is no vote"

To date, the California Certified Organic Farmers and the Alliance for Food and Farming have gone on record supporting the aerial spraying. So has Pesticide Action Network, which called the pheromone the least hazardous of remedies and "far preferable" to the use of chemical pesticides.

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The light brown apple moth — jokingly referred to as the "light brown everything moth" for its huge appetite — was first discovered in the U.S. in Berkeley in February in a professor's trap in his backyard.

Since then, the moth has managed to flutter its way into Santa Cruz County, long considered the most infected area of the state, with more than 6,000 moths trapped.

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Isolated and detected mostly amid the region's nurseries, nursery growers are the ones who have suffered the greatest setbacks — not due to the bug's voracious appetite but to the restrictions placed on nursery shipments. State and federal quarantines restrict shipments, particularly out of country, where Canada has red-flagged the pest.

Some have had to temporarily shut down operations every time a moth is detected, having no recourse but to spray their plants with pesticides as a prerequisite of reopening.

Some growers have a hunch the moth had been around for at least two years before its presence was verified. They think the state and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are overreacting to the presence of an insect whose greatest financial inflictions have occurred abroad.

Jeff Rosendale, the owner of Sierra Azul Nursery in Watsonville, has come up with a sort of catchphrase to describe the events and the situation, saying the light brown apple moth's destruction may very well be an illusion — "and not a moth of mass destruction"

"We, of course, disagree," Lyle said.

He added the state plans to conduct more treatments in the spring and for several years until the moth is completely eradicated. Treatments are effective for 30 days.

And while the state identifies all of Santa Cruz County as well as Monterey County from Salinas north for spraying, no timeline has been set for the remainder of the areas.

"Any one area within this population center is likely to receive at least two and probably several treatments until it is determined that LBAM [light brown apple moth] has been eradicated from the site," according to an environmental assessment report issued by the state. "Complete eradication within the Santa Cruz and Northern Monterey area is expected to take several years"

Contact Tom Ragan at [tragan@santacruzsentinel.com](mailto:tragan@santacruzsentinel.com)

## Light Brown Apple Moth Spraying

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

**WHEN:** 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. Nov. 4-9.

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](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/ea/downloads/lbam_ea_sc.pdf)

**SOURCE:** California Department of Food and Agriculture

Number of comments : 27

**SCMOM**

9/26/2007 6:42 AM

Not to sure how I feel about the spraying. In the past our government would say that it wasn't harmful for other things they sprayed and it ended up causing cancer, birth defects, etc.

Obviously, the moth is a big issue at this time. I'm more concerned about our kids and what harm this may do in the future.

**SC Doula**

9/26/2007 8:29 AM

The last time this spraying happened our Neonatal Intensive Care Units filled with premature babies. The spray has hormones in it and I suspect that it's causing women to go into labor early. Has any research been done on this!?!

**Mr. PG**

9/26/2007 9:09 AM

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Thank goodness. It's a pest. Get rid of it!!!!!!

**Merci**

*9/26/2007 10:17 AM*

I am just concerned about the affect on people with certain allergies. Do we need to be on the alert for that?????

**ottis**

*9/26/2007 10:36 AM*

This is totally insane. There are so many contradictions in their pro spray action it is hard to know where it began.

The no spray approach of traps is working. They admit they have been catching thousands of moths and there are thousands around here and still no crop damage. Why not continue to use traps? Because some one will make a least 2 million from this spray job alone. Spraying is not to help protect growers because there is no crop damage here by the moth to this date!

To massively spray an entire county is an illogical reaction by state and federal officials. They are worried about a moth that has done no crop damage in this county. By their logic we then should make it mandatory to for everyone to take flu shots because the flu kills thousands every year. That even makes more sense than spraying for moth control when the moth has caused no damage in this county.

Not only do local farmers and growers thinks "the

state and USDA is over reacting" but the moth has been around for at least 2 years before their official discovery in 02/07. To this date there is still no crop damage by the moth to the local community. Local growers have suffered but not from the moth but they have suffered from State and Federal restrictions and quarantines placed on nurseries & growers!

We will be sprayed for 6 straight days and the chemicals will stay in the air for all of us to breathe for 30 more days. If that is not enough they will do this mass spraying several times a year for "several years" to come. Lots of money is to be made in this spray operation.

Their blatant disregard for public comments or concerns is pathetic. The public hearing is only meant to humor us and make us feel like they care about what we think but they obviously don't as Lyle said "the authority rest with the state there is no vote" - you will be sprayed. Do we still live in a free country? When did this turn into a dictatorship? The people voice is important and we the people will be the deciders.

How did our public servants come to think they have ultimate control over the people? This is our county we the people have the ultimate control over what is done here. How dare you say "the authority rest with the state there is no vote" - you will be sprayed. Shame on you!!

**james**

*9/26/2007 10:50 AM*

Will this hurt the monarchs that are due to visit during that time?

**D. Miller**

9/26/2007 12:23 PM

THIS IS A SHAMEFUL SCAM!! It is absolutely ridiculous to spray the human population (using the population's own tax dollars to do it) for a moth that they admit has most likely already been in the area for 2 years so far and has CAUSED NO DAMAGE AT ALL in that time!! This is absolute fear mongering and is a blatant disregard of the public's health interest. In fact, it's a blatant slap in the face to the public's interest in general... especially when the spokesman for the state Department of Food and Agriculture openly states "The authority rests with the state. There is no vote"!! In essence, what he is saying is that YOU WILL BE SUBJECTED TO WHATEVER WE DECIDE TO SPRAY ON YOU, WHETHER AGAINST YOUR WILL OR NOT, AND YOU WILL JUST HAVE TO TRUST US THAT WE'RE ACTUALLY SPRAYING WHAT WE SAY WE'RE SPRAYING, DAMN THE CONSEQUENCES!! Goodbye to your freedom and personal rights. This is nothing more than a money-making scheme for a select few at the cost of the health of the entire population. Unbelievable... absolutely disgusting, shameful, and unbelievable.

**Ingerman**

9/26/2007 12:47 PM

We know that this is a synthetic fragrance. We know that last time it was used there were too many ER premie babies to be a coincidence. The fact that synthetic musks or fragrances are causing many health problems in our country already - from asthma to cancer seems to be a top secret.

If the people of Santa Cruz become disoriented,



confused, irritable, start vomiting for "no reason" and become generally as eloquent as the President for a month or so - we will know why! This is the first sign of synthetic musk poisoning. The damage done to lungs and endocrine systems as well as the nerves will show up differently in different people, but it will be there. Synthetic fragrances are easily inhaled, are made to affix - to your laundry or your internal tissues - and do not wash out. They accumulate. In your children's bodies. They cause cancer. And you will let them spray for how long? We don't have a "vote"?

Then start ordering your carbon filter masks!

I have to use mine anyway just to be around your perfumes!

Good Luck!

II

**Dala**

9/26/2007 1:00 PM

I sure don't regret moving from Santa Cruz a few years ago. It really is a difficult area to live in.

**Moike**

9/26/2007 1:05 PM

**Ingerman:**

*If the people of Santa Cruz become disoriented, confused, irritable, start vomiting for "no reason"...*

So what you're really saying is that I should notice no change at all in the mood or conduct of the general Santa Cruz populace during the spraying?

Excellent, Thanks!

**Kenn Reiller**

*9/26/2007 1:29 PM*

The State Agricultural Agency's claim to Authority does not provide enough information for citizens to participate in this government process and "Spraying Project". They need to address their Administrative Powers and exposure to Liability for any adverse consequences resulting from errors, omissions, and perhaps underlying incompetence to define the problem and select an appropriate solution to this moth issue of concern. The Public is entitled to know more detail on this Agency's Administrative Power involving their scope of responsibility for public health and how it overlaps with other local and state agencies with the same charge. Additionally, they should disclose their control of funds to conduct the work without Public oversight as implied in their statements. Based on this Ag. Agency's handling of this moth situation so far, their statement Power is viewed as a smoke screen and likely un-supportable with Public Trust governance values that strive for reason and balance when granting Responsibility, Authority and Control of a situation to Public Official or Agency to conduct business. Given the length of time this problem has been around they should be complying with the California Environmental Quality Act and produce a Environmental Impact Report for the proposed "Spraying Project"; In my view, Public Trust demands it.

**Coughing in CA**

*9/26/2007 1:59 PM*

This has been bad news down here in Monterey with

many people sick. We all said previously that there would be rioting in the streets before this happened in Santa Cruz (we like to think it's more liberal there), so we were hoping someone up there would file a suit (no one here can seem to). Here's a website about all that's gone on in Monterey:

<http://www.1hope.org/chkmate.htm>

Don't let it happen to you!

**brent**

*9/26/2007 2:00 PM*

Since the government considers us all rats in it's cage, SC county cannot stop this spraying.

My only hope is that the synthetic pheromone is on the National List of approved synthetics complying with the USDA National Organic Program. Does CCOF have a position on this? Any growers out there concerned over possible crop rejections down the road? I'd hate to get a shipment of organic strawberries over to Japan only to find out I failed a synthetic residue scan.

**Ima Wiseone**

*9/26/2007 2:56 PM*

This is a targeted attack on Santa Cruz by the authorities. This will ruin organic food, hurt people with multiple environmental disorders, retard the brains of our children. There is evidence that this type of spraying on the agricultural regions of the Midwest and Bakersfield is what turns people in to Republicans. In addition, it interacts with the waves from cell phones and the radiation from microwaves

to cause cancer, ADD, dementia, hives and athlete's foot!

This is clearly a plot by the Bush administration to subjugate an area of resistance to him and his corporate cronies plan for world domination.

The good news is that you can ward off some of the effects. On the days of spraying, keep all of your clothes in an airtight container, tupperware will work, coat yourself with vasoline and stay inside. Even with this you need to breathe through a carbon filter mask.

After the spraying wash your dwelling and repaint it. The paint will contain the poisons until they decompose. Wash of the vasoline with bottled water, because the water will be contaminated for up to 6 months.

Good luck. Be well.

**bj**

*9/26/2007 3:40 PM*

There is evidence of the oak moth and its damage to the trees by way of complete defoliation. If we can live with that we can live with a "potential" problem with apple moths.

**heybucko**

*9/26/2007 4:26 PM*

I'm gonna vomit!

**mommadona**

*9/26/2007 4:31 PM*

Anyone remember when they sprayed the most expensive property in the world with malathion in the 1980s?

All the pubahs in Santa Clara valley were gungho for it....well....a little bit of karma - they had a big old benefit 'soiree' at a well-known art center and ...heeeere come the helicopters, spraying nasty smelling, sticky goo....there went the pubahs in evening attire, heading as fast as they could to an open door way.....

A bit of comin' back atcha?

PRICELESS.

**doonman**

*9/26/2007 4:33 PM*

I'm worried what it will do to my hairstyle. I've seen the pictures of the blokes from down under.

**Bob**

*9/26/2007 7:58 PM*

Pheromones are allowed for use on organic crops under the National Organic Program. The CCOF has endorsed this environmentally friendly alternative eradication program. So has PANNA and the NRDC.

**SC Mom**

*9/26/2007 11:34 PM*

READ THIS FOR INFORMATION ON THIS PESTICIDE:

<http://www.1hope.org/chkmate.htm>

Santa Cruz citizens, Let us unite to fight against this unneeded and untested chemical being breathed by ourselves and our children.

**concerned citizen**

*9/26/2007 11:44 PM*

can't we start a lawsuit to postpone or delay the spraying?

**please don't spray us**

*9/26/2007 11:49 PM*

It's all about the money:

"Meanwhile, activists following the money have discovered that the owner of the pheromone manufacturing company is a major contributor to Gov. Schwarzenegger. State records show that Stewart and Lynda Resnick, co-chairs of Los Angeles-based Roll International, contributed \$144,600 to Schwarzenegger's 2006 gubernatorial campaign. Roll International's many subsidiaries include Fiji Water, Paramount Agribusiness and Suterra Inc., the company that manufactures the Checkmate products being sprayed on the Peninsula."

[http://www.montereycountyweekly.com/issues/Issue.09-27-2007/news/Article.news\\_5](http://www.montereycountyweekly.com/issues/Issue.09-27-2007/news/Article.news_5)

**brent**

*9/27/2007 11:13 AM*

Thanks Bob. Maybe CCOF should make multiple

public statements regarding the safety of synthetic pheromones in open letters to the Sentinel, Metro, Good Times, City on the Hill, etc. The public needs to hear that California Certified Organic Farmers supports this spraying and considers it 'environmentally friendly'.

**Coughing in CA**

9/27/2007 12:20 PM

PANNA is not endorsing further aerial spraying until multiple conditions are met.

[http://www.montereyherald.com/ci\\_7012289](http://www.montereyherald.com/ci_7012289)

**yougots to get down**

9/27/2007 3:36 PM

wow what a chance at love with all those pheromones floating in the air - i would be worried if i was part of the female population like jamentia - "maybe" there could be aimless couplings by pheromone inebriated males who had smoked so much devil grass that thier immune system was compromised and simply did not realize where they were going or who they were doing it to!!!!YOU GOTS TO GET DOWN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

**Anonymous**

9/27/2007 3:59 PM

concerned citizen... what is delaying the spray going to do? Well let's think about it....delay....webster's definition : to put something off for a period of time. so again, delay?? they will spray eventually. HELLO!!!!

**Azalyne SkyeOlson**

9/27/2007 11:01 PM

This is not a laughing matter. It is a very serious one which demands an immediate call to action! I have many many friends in Monterey who are ill as a result of the recent aerial spraying and we are looking at two years of this!!!! Read the labels of what is being sprayed. It is easy to tout that this is a harmless pheromone, however, it is important to remember that it is completely synthetic and its labeling mandates by federal law that it is NOT be used in this manner! How are they getting away with it you ask? The state has filed an emergency petition through the EPA that does not hold the manufactures specific labeling instructions as relevant. READ THE LABELS PEOPLE! This is NOT SAFE for us to be breathing, it is synthetic, it has never been tested on humans and we are essentially being offered up as human guinea pigs. We need to fight this. I have been involved in the Monterey County Protest and I would like to see Santa Cruz rise to the occasion~come on people we are being called to action. Santa Cruz lets walk the walk...

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