

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Gypsy Moth aerial treatments to resume early next week

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MADISON – Residents of six western Wisconsin counties can expect to hear and see low-flying planes in the early morning, depending on weather conditions, starting next week.

The treatments are planned in the following six counties over the next four weeks: Barron, Buffalo, Chippewa, Crawford, Dunn, & Vernon.

From late June to mid-July, yellow planes contracted by the U.S. Forest Service in a joint project with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), will be applying an organic, biodegradable mating disruptor to 11 sites in 6 counties in the western third of the state. Unlike the earlier spring treatments that targeted gypsy moth caterpillars, the mating disruptor targets adult male moths.

“Female gypsy moths do not fly. They give off a pheromone, or a chemical scent, which attracts male gypsy moths,” explained Christopher Foelker, DATCP’s gypsy moth program manager. “The product we apply to the tree canopy emits the same scent, so the male moths cannot find the females. These treatments are highly effective at reducing the mating success of this insect. The chemical signal released is specific to gypsy moth and will not interfere with the life cycle of other insects.”

The gypsy moth has a wide range of harmful effects on local communities. The cost of removing dead trees around a house can range from several hundred to over a thousand dollars and the loss of mature trees decreases property value. During the spring and summer, caterpillars shed bristly skin as they grow. Bristles from the cast skins become airborne and can irritate eyes, skin and the respiratory system. People may develop a rash if they come in contact with the bristles.

About the Product

The product is aerially applied and dispersed across the forest canopy as small waxy droplets which slowly release the synthetic gypsy moth mating pheromone. Past research shows this can reduce gypsy moth populations by nearly 90 percent in the subsequent year.

The mating disruptor is not harmful to humans, animals, birds or other insects. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, there is no health risk to humans nor have any adverse effects been reported in the two decades that this pheromone has been used for gypsy moth control.

Stay Updated

Treatment dates and times are weather dependent. People can sign up to receive email notifications about treatment plans at gypsymoth.wi.gov. Daily updates during the treatment season are posted to DATCP's Facebook and Twitter account. They can listen to a recorded message about the plans by calling the toll-free Gypsy Moth Information Line at 1-800-642-6684. Press menu option 1 for updates.

Treatments will begin in late June in southwestern Wisconsin and end in mid-July in northwestern Wisconsin. Maps of specific treatment areas are available online at <https://datcpgis.wi.gov/maps/?viewer=gm>

Aerial treatments will be completed by the Slow the Spread Program. It focuses its efforts in western Wisconsin where gypsy moth populations are low or beginning to increase. The objective is to slow the westward spread of gypsy moth.