



OHIO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE GYPSY MOTH PROGRAM

Division of Plant Industry, Plant Pest Control Section
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<http://www.agri.ohio.gov/gypsymoth>



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY BLOCK RESIDENTS

SLOW THE SPREAD, ERADICATION PROGRAMS

Q. What does a gypsy moth look like?

A. When caterpillars hatch, they are about 1/8th inch long and black. As they grow, they become very "hairy", and develop conspicuous blue and red dots on their backs. Full, grown caterpillars are 1 1/2 to 2 inches long. The caterpillars then become pupae (cocoons), which are 1/2 to 1 inch long, brown in color and teardrop shaped. When the moths emerge from the cocoons, the males are brown and fly in a zigzag pattern, while the females are white with dark markings and cannot fly. After mating, the females lay egg masses, which are tan to brown in color, oval and about the size of a quarter in size, and covered with hairs from the female's body.

Q. What do the caterpillars like to eat?

A. Gypsy moth caterpillars feed on the leaves of many hardwood trees, especially Oak, hickory, willow, birch, apple, alder, witch hazel, etc. In some stages they feed on conifers as well, including spruce, hemlock, pine and larch. If gypsy moth populations reach high levels in areas where there are large numbers of favored host trees, they can cause extensive tree damage.

Q. When will the spray applications take place?

A. Spray applications begin in early to mid May. The timing is dependent on several factors, including growth of tree foliage, caterpillar development, spray block location, and the weather. No definite date or time for spraying any particular block can be determined in advance. Residents can call the Gypsy Moth Hotline for current information on the progress of the spray project.

Q. At what time of day will spray applications take place?

A. Ideally, spray applications take place during early morning hours, usually beginning about 6:00 a.m.. However, sprays may be applied in the early evening, before dark, if weather conditions are more appropriate.

Q. Do the spray planes fly low?

A. Yes. The application planes fly at 50 to 100 feet above treetop level. This is necessary because the insecticide is designed to be applied to the tree leaves as a very fine mist.

Q. If a plane flies over my house, does that mean it is spraying?

A. No. The pilot(s) often fly over the area to observe the spray block before any spray is applied. Then the pilot begins making straight runs, but must turn around to spray in the other direction. The spray is turned off when the pilot is negotiating turns.

Q. What insecticides are used?

A. ODA uses four insecticides in the Slow the Spread and Eradication programs. 1) Btk, is a microbial pesticide made up of bacteria and spores that are toxic to gypsy moth caterpillars. When the caterpillars eat leaves sprayed with Btk they get sick, stop feeding and eventually die. 2) Dimilin, is a synthetic insect growth regulator. When the caterpillars feed on leaves treated with Dimilin, the insecticide prevents them from molting successfully to the next stage of their life cycle. 3) Mimic is a synthetic insect growth regulator. When the caterpillars feed on leaves treated with Mimic, the insecticide causes them to prematurely molt and die. 4) Gypchek contains a virus that is specific to gypsy moth. When the caterpillars feed on the leaves treated with Gypchek, the virus attacks and destroys the stomach cells causing its death. Due to the limited supply of Gypchek, it is reserved for those areas that contain Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species.

Q. What if I am outside when the planes are spraying?

A. Many people choose to stay indoors when the planes are spraying as a precautionary measure. If you are outside when the planes fly over, the insecticides used by ODA are not harmful to people or pets. Often people with allergies or respiratory conditions consult their physicians and are instructed to stay indoors to minimize their exposure, but there have been no documented cases of health problems caused by gypsy moth suppression sprays.

Q. Will the spray harm my pets?

A. No. The insecticides used have very low toxicity levels and do not have any growth or reproductive effects on test animals. You may choose to bring your pets inside, but there is no requirement to do so. Horses, however, may be frightened by the low flying planes. It is advisable to keep them stabled when spray applications are expected.

Q. Will the insecticide harm honeybees?

A. No. None of the insecticides used have any effect on honeybees.

Q. Do I have to cover my vegetable garden?

A. No. None of the insecticides used are toxic when sprayed on home gardens. Just follow normal procedures and wash your vegetables before eating them.

Q. I have a well (or pond) that I use for drinking water. Will the spray applications affect my water supply?

A. No. None of the insecticides used will affect the ground water supply. Open water areas will not be sprayed.

Q. Is there any cost to me for the treatment?

A. No. The Slow the Spread and Eradication Programs are funded by ODA, USDA Forest Service and USDA APHIS/PPQ.

For further information please contact:

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