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[Proposed spraying for gypsy moth gets a cool reception at meeting](#)
Residents say they're concerned about possible health side effects from the pesticide the state wants to use in Eugene

BY NAT LEVY

The Register-Guard

State agriculture and health department officials made their case Thursday night for spraying 636 acres in southeast Eugene with a pesticide intended to eradicate the gypsy moth.

But they didn't get much support from area residents or local environmentalists.

More than 50 people attended the session, and most seemed suspicious of the health effects of the chemical — *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki*, or Btk — that would cover more than 1,500 homes.

Brandy Goodson, who lives right in the middle of the proposed spray area around Old Dillard Road, said she's concerned for the health of her child, who has asthma.

"It's right in my backyard," she said. "I think it needs to be explored further."

The Oregon Department of Agriculture called the meeting after finding a small population of the invasive gypsy moth. Two individual gypsy moths were caught in traps in southeast Eugene in 2007, and another seven last year.

When gypsy moths are caught in the same area two years in a row, spraying of the area is typically considered, state agriculture official Helmuth Rogg said.

"If we don't do eradication, the impact will be a very detrimental effect on our ecosystem that cannot be reversed," Rogg said prior to the meeting.

A primary question that surfaced at the sometimes-contentious meeting, held at Calvary Fellowship church, was how seven moths equates to an infestation. Rogg said it demonstrates a consistent presence of the species, which can easily explode in one year because females lay egg masses that can hatch as many as 1,000 new larvae.

When gypsy moths begin to proliferate, they can defoliate large areas, Rogg said. The state advocates spraying as its primary option because gypsy moths are an invasive species to the entire country, where there is no natural predator.

One idea broached at the meeting was attacking the insects with a virus specific to gypsy moths. Many attendees approved of that strategy, but Rogg said there is no commercial

product approved in the state that contains the virus.

In addition to concerned neighbors, environmental groups such as the Oregon Toxics Alliance also oppose the spraying method, citing dangerous side effects of the insecticide Foray 48B, of which Btk makes up only 17 percent.

Residents and others in attendance cited studies they said show adverse effects after past uses, including illnesses for humans and detrimental effects to other animals, such as native species of butterflies.

Lisa Arkin, alliance director, said gypsy moths are undeniably a problem, but that eradication should not come at the expense of human health.

“Before you spray over 1,500 homes, you better look for a solution that doesn’t impact human health,” she said.

Lane County has a long history with the European, and sometimes Asian, invaders. The largest gypsy moth outbreak on the West Coast occurred in Lane County in 1984. Between then and 1989, 425,546 acres of land in Lane County had been sprayed aerially with Btk, according to a state Department of Agriculture report. The cost of the eradication process in Lane County over those years totaled approximately \$18 million, the report said.

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