

NEWS RELEASE

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MDA set to conduct Minnetonka gypsy moth eradication on or around May 18

Exact treatment date will depend on weather and moth development

ST. PAUL, Minn. – The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is preparing to treat a 303-acre area of Minnetonka to eradicate a gypsy moth infestation detected last fall. Officials will conduct the treatments the week of Monday, May 18, with the exact date determined by weather conditions and moth development.

In 2008, the MDA's statewide gypsy moth monitoring program detected the localized infestation of the destructive tree pest in a section of Minnetonka just south of Highway 7 between Williston Road and Interstate 494. The infestation is part of a record number of detections statewide - the MDA's trapping program caught more than 12,000 moths this past summer, far above the previous all-time high of 3,600 in 2007.

To eradicate the moths before they spread, officials will conduct two aerial applications of *Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki* (Btk) over the same area, spaced 7-10 days apart. Btk is a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved bacterium with very low risk for humans or animals other than caterpillars. Over the years, MDA has eradicated dozens of gypsy moth infestations on thousands of acres across the state. In the Twin Cities area, MDA eliminated infestations in south Minneapolis and Golden Valley in 2002, in Edina in 2004, and in Brooklyn Park in 2006. These efforts protect forest health, property values and the state's tourism industry.

Gypsy moths are among America's most destructive tree pests, having caused millions of dollars in damage to Eastern forests. The moths are common in Wisconsin and are now threatening Minnesota. If present in large numbers, gypsy moth caterpillars can defoliate large sections of forest. Oak, poplar, birch and willow are among their preferred hosts. The moths spread slowly on their own, but people can unintentionally help them spread by transporting firewood or other items on which the moths have laid their eggs.

To help area citizens stay informed, the MDA has set up an Arrest the Pest Hotline at **651-201-MOTH**. Starting next week (May 10-16), the hotline will offer the latest details about treatment dates and times. MDA's website (www.mda.state.mn.us/gypsymoth) also has information about gypsy moths and control efforts.

Finally, MDA offers the following tips to residents in and around the treatment area:

- For the moth treatment to work, it must begin early in the morning. Residents may be awakened on that day by the noise of the low-flying helicopter. MDA apologizes for any inconvenience;
- The helicopter noise may spook pets, so residents may wish to keep them indoors during the treatment;
- The treatment product has no known health effects for humans, but to avoid it residents may wish to stay indoors during the treatment and keep windows closed for a half hour after application; and
- The residue will not damage a vehicle's finish, but residents may wish to park vehicles indoors to avoid having to wash them after the application. Soapy water will remove any residue on outdoor items.

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