



# 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>



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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY BLOCK RESIDENTS

### **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 planes are crop dusters that fly at 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 two insecticides in their suppression program. One, 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. The other, 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. Therefore, the caterpillars cannot become moths and lay eggs to increase the population for the following year.

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

**A.** Many people choose to stay indoors when the planes are spraying, but it is not required that you do so. Even if you are outside when the planes fly over, the insecticides used by ODAS are not harmful to people or pets. There may be a slight odor in the air, especially when Btk is the insecticide applied. 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. Both Dimilin and Btk 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 either insecticide harm honeybees?**

**A.** No. Neither Dimilin, or Btk has any effect on honeybees or other beneficial insects.

**Q. Do I have to cover my vegetable garden?**

**A.** No. Neither of the insecticides used in the ODA Suppression Program is toxic when sprayed on home gardens. You may harvest and eat the vegetables after washing them.

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

**A.** Both Dimilin and Btk break down rapidly in the soil, and will not affect the ground water supply. Open water will not be sprayed.

**Q. What if someone says they don't want to be sprayed and...?**

**They live in the middle of the site...**

**They live on the edge of the site...**

**This person lives next to me...**

**A.** Since this is a voluntary suppression program. No one is forced to participate. But we strongly recommend that everyone would participate to avoid potential re-infestation points within the treatment block.

If someone opt outs (not to participate), a 200 foot buffer is maintained around their property. If they are on the edge of a site, that area will be moved out of the treatment block. If they are in the middle of the block, an exclusion can be put around them. If there are many opt outs, the whole block risks being dropped out of the project. It is the block coordinator's job to let us know where the opt outs are located. If someone lives next to an opt outs, their property will fall within the 200 foot buffer and will not be sprayed. They will have to contract with a local tree care company if they want anything done.

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

**A.** Yes. The Suppression Program has a Cost Share provision with the landowner. The landowner is obligated to pay 50% of the cost of the treatment, while state and federal agencies pick up the balance.

**For further information please contact:**

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