

Living with light brown apple moth

As a retired entomologist who worked for California health departments for many years, I read "Light brown apple moth's arrival in California worries commodity groups" (April-June 2008) with great interest.

If the data provided is accurate, then two reasonable conclusions can be reached. First, despite the 2005 California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) survey failing to find *Epiphyas postvittana*, it has probably been present in California for a very long time. Second, using currently available technology the moth cannot be eradicated. Given the extremely high level of commerce between Hawaii and California, it is likely that the moth has been introduced regularly.

The failure to detect its presence is due largely to difficulties with identification. Another factor in failure to detect must surely be suggested. The light brown apple moth cannot have been causing a great deal of loss. The onset of damage that is not attributable to a known cause is the most common way that pests are discovered. Dangerous pests are not routinely discovered serendipitously by one of the few people in the world who can identify them.

The article by Garvey states that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has earmarked about \$74.5 million for California to combat light brown apple moth in 2008. Those funds could be better spent on long-term research, or to directly help in situations with confirmed infestations.

Randall Blair
Retired Entomologist
Paso Robles

Thanks for the balanced overview of the light brown apple moth in *California Agriculture* (April-June 2008). There is too much hysteria and misinformation about the "insect of mass destruction" and how it can reasonably be managed with minimal risk to humans and their environment.

I am a librarian at UC Berkeley's Public Health Library and have been researching the light brown apple moth and CheckMate nonstop for weeks in response to patron requests. It has been difficult to get both sides of the story.

For instance, there is limited information about CheckMate, the Suterra product that was used in the aerial spraying programs in Monterey and Santa Cruz, because the manufacturer is protecting the formulation as proprietary information. There was no analysis of possible health effects, no environmental impact report, no risk communication efforts to inform the public, no re-

porting system so that citizens could report health complaints. We do know the active and inert ingredients. Its efficacy is unproven. The usual pesticide registration process has been bypassed at the federal level because the light brown apple moth threat is considered an "emergency."

Although CDFA is trying to "eradicate" this pest, some scientists believe it is already established. Should that be the case, there are known, effective integrated pest management practices, both in New Zealand, where it is an invasive species, and in Australia, where it is a native pest.

For now, Santa Cruz County Superior Court Judge Paul Burdick has halted spraying in that county until an environmental impact report has been completed. The larger issue is that as long as we insist on having fresh produce regardless of the season we will probably keep introducing new pests into our country.

Charleen Kubota
Librarian, Public Health Library
UC Berkeley

Editor's note: Shortly before press time, state and federal officials halted plans to aerially apply pheromones in urban areas, previously a part of the eradication effort against the light brown apple moth. They will use a combination of other tactics instead.

Food safety and postharvest technology

"Growers removing conservation practices to protect food safety on California's Central Coast" (April-June 2008) presented important findings on a subject at the forefront of growers' minds: how to develop on-farm food safety practices in harmony with environmental stewardship.

This is a complex issue, and its resolution will require collaboration of the scientific, industrial and regulatory communities. The good news is that UC's multidisciplinary faculty, such as those found within ANR-supported centers like the Postharvest Technology Research & Information Center, can provide exactly what is needed to address such thorny issues. UC must pursue research that can help California growers assure the safety of fruits and vegetables in a sustainable manner — adopting practices that all stakeholders can support.

For information on how to assure the safety of fruits and vegetables in a sustainable manner, and for a listing of upcoming workshops, go to <http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu>.

James R. Gorny, Executive Director
Postharvest Technology Research
& Information Center, UC Davis



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