



Washington State Department of Agriculture

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Clark County town proposed for gypsy moth eradication next spring

OLYMPIA – The [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) announced today a proposal to eradicate an infestation of European gypsy moth found in Yacolt, located about 20 miles northeast of Vancouver. The proposal calls for treating 220 acres of land northeast of Yacolt.

Gypsy moth is a destructive pest that is not native to Washington and can cause significant damage to urban trees and forests if allowed to spread.

During last summer's statewide trapping efforts, WSDA trappers found 16 gypsy moths in the Yacolt area. Additional evidence for gypsy moth was detected, including finding a viable fresh egg mass capable of producing up to 1,000 gypsy moth caterpillars. Pupal cases and cast skins from caterpillars were also found.

"The evidence of a reproducing population of gypsy moth in Yacolt is of concern to me," said Jim Marra, manager of WSDA's Pest Program. "We also detected a spent egg mass and that means this small population has been brewing for more than a year. Now is the time to stop it from spreading."

Overall, trappers found 27 gypsy moths in five counties, but the Yacolt area is the only proposed eradication project. WSDA staff consulted with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and entomologists from other states before making a decision to recommend the Yacolt project.

If approved, the operation in Yacolt will take place in April and May 2015. Three aerial applications of a biological insecticide (Btk or *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki*) would be applied to trees, shrubs and other vegetation, three to 14 days apart. Btk is registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and is found naturally in the environment.

WSDA will comply with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) before deciding whether or not to approve the proposal. A community open house in Yacolt is being planned in February to discuss the project.

[Gypsy moths](#) typically arrive in Washington in the form of egg masses attached to outdoor articles, such as birdhouses and patio furniture, or hitchhike on vehicles arriving from the 19 permanently infested states on the East Coast and upper Midwest. The damage to foliage is done when gypsy moth caterpillars hatch in large numbers in the spring and devour the leaves of deciduous trees, many urban ornamental trees and fruit trees.

Permanent populations of the gypsy moth have never been detected in Washington. WSDA's most recent treatment for gypsy moth was in Tukwila in 2013.

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