

A CROP-DUSTER makes a low pass across the marshes of Holden Beach Saturday morning as agricultural experts began the most extensive aerial pesticide spraying program in the state's history, aimed at eradicating an infestation of Asian Gypsy moths.

First Round Of Moth Spraying Should Be Complete By Sunday

BY ERIC CARLSON
It looked like a scene from an old World War II movie as fast-moving, propeller driven airplanes dove in for tree-top strafing runs across thousands of Brunswick County acres this week.

Round one in the state's fight to knock out an infestation of leaf-eating Asian gypsy moths is expected to end Sunday, with hardly a pause before the planes return for a second application of pesticide.

By late Tuesday, the planes had treated all of Ocean Isle Beach, Holden Beach, Sunny Point, Boiling Spring Lakes and most of the area between Bolivia and the Sunny Point railroad tracks, said Ken Stillwell, a N.C. Department of Agriculture plant protection specialist.

Early fog delayed operations Tuesday morning, allowing only about two hours of spraying, Stillwell said. Members of the Gypsy Moth Management Team felt the threat of rain from an approaching cold front also could delay spraying Wednesday. Still, experts hoped to move toward Southport, Oak Island and the west bank of the Cape Fear River Thursday and to finish the first application of insecticide by Sunday.

The second round of spraying will begin immediately after the first, and in roughly the same order, Stillwell said. Day-to-day target areas will depend on the weather.

Residents can call a Gypsy Moth Hotline at 1-800-449-9007 for the latest update on the spraying schedule. During business hours, members of the management team will be available to answer questions. At night, a recorded message will list the areas proposed for spraying the following day. Callers may leave a telephone number if they wish to receive a return call.

Stillwell said that as of Tuesday about 200 to 300 people had called the hotline. Nearly all the calls were

from people asking about the spray schedule.

"Most folks want to know when we're going to spray in their area," Stillwell said. "We've had no major problems and very few complaints."

Nearly all of the 130,000-acre treatment area is being sprayed with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), a naturally occurring bacterium commonly available in plant stores garden centers under the trade names "Worm Whipper" and "Dipel." On 4,000 acres where scientists feel that Bt could harm rare or fragile species, an insect virus called Gypchek is being applied.

Both pesticides only affect moths and butterflies and are not considered harmful to other insects, birds

or mammals.

The goal of the program is to coat the leaves that provide food for gypsy moth caterpillars shortly after they hatch. A second spray application is planned to kill those that emerge late from their egg masses.

State and federal agriculture officials launched the most extensive aerial spraying program in North Carolina history after Asian gypsy moths were found on a ship docked at the Sunny Point military ammunition terminal last summer.

Considered to be one of the most damaging plant pests known, an infestation of gypsy moth caterpillars can completely strip trees of their leaves, causing serious damage to woodlands.

Workers Sought To Help Set Gypsy Moth Traps

State and federal agriculture officials need help in setting gypsy moth traps along a 1,600-square-mile area in southeastern North Carolina and a small section of South Carolina.

Trappers are placing about 40,000 traps from North Myrtle Beech in South Carolina to Topsail Island in North Carolina. The traps will help officials gauge the effectiveness of a moth treatment program launched April 8.

The N.C. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture started spraying Friday in Brunswick and New Hanover counties.

The agencies have hired 45 people and will hire about 15 more, according to Bill Dickerson, an NCDA plant pest administrator who is overseeing the eradication project.

"We're looking for people who don't mind working in the woods," Dickerson said. Trap placement was initiated today. Officials are asking residents to help keep the traps oper-

ational.

The orange- or green-colored traps, which are about 8 inches long and 5 inches high, contain a female sex pheromone which attracts male gypsy moths, he said.

"The purpose of the trap is to detect any residual population after this treatment is finished," Dickerson said.

Most of the workers hired will work in Brunswick County, although a few more are needed in New Hanover and Pender counties, according to Dickerson.

Those interested in applying for a position need their own transportation, preferably a four-wheel-drive vehicle. They should call 1-800-449-9007. People seeking information about spray schedules can also call the toll-free number.

Meanwhile, workers had treated approximately 54,000 acres as of Monday afternoon.

The strain of gypsy moth found in New Hanover and Brunswick coun-

ties is of particular concern to scientists because the adult female flies, which leads to a broader dispersal of eggs. The infestation consists of a European-Asian cross-strain and the Asian gypsy moth.

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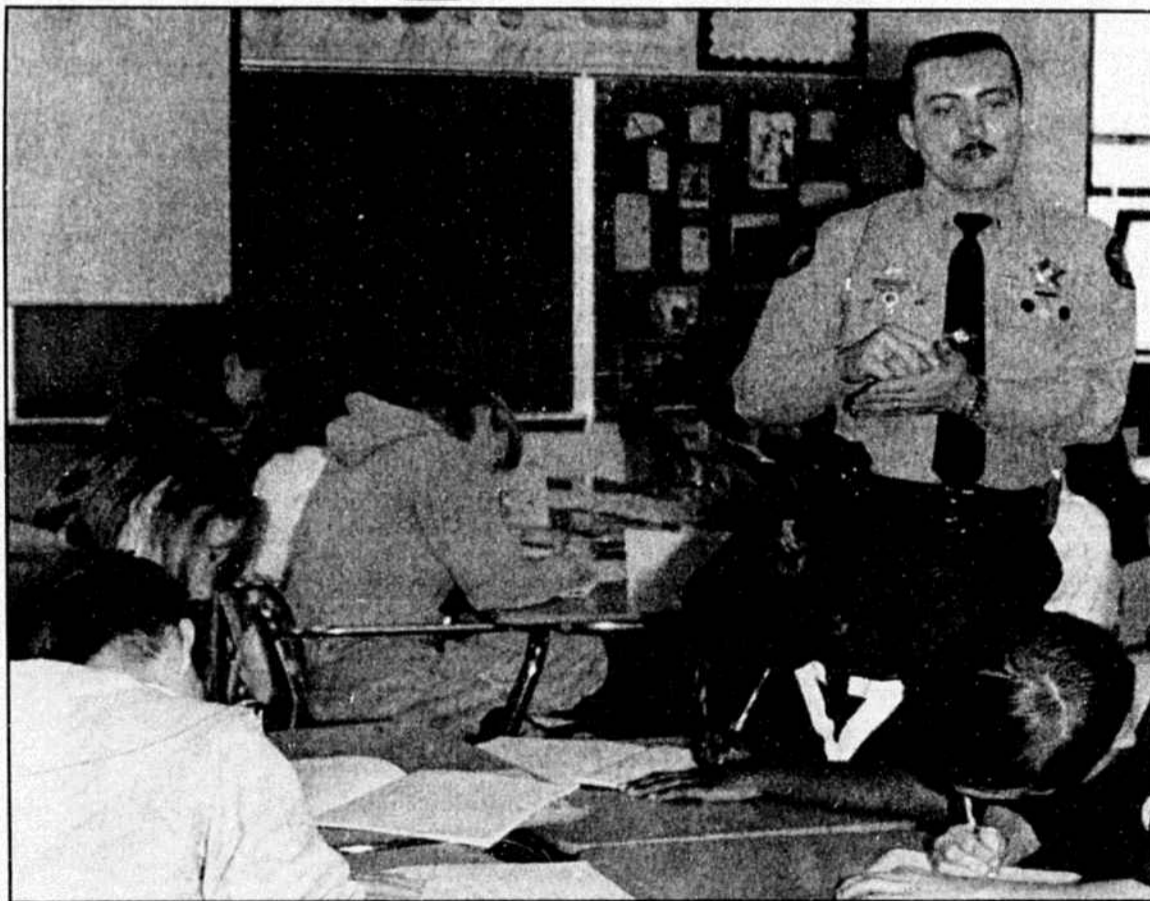
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"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Ronald Hewett has made a name for himself as national and state D.A.R.E. Officer of the Year. D.A.R.E. stands for Drug Abuse Resistance Education. Its purpose is to educate our young people about the dangers of drugs and out of courts and jails.

It is an important effort that Ronald Hewett would like to expand into the junior and senior high schools after he becomes Sheriff.

Ronald Hewett also wants the opportunity to make a name for himself as Brunswick County Sheriff. He has the background, the education, the leadership ability and integrity to run the entire Sheriff's department in the same kind of professional



way he does his job as Brunswick County D.A.R.E. Program Coordinator and Narcotics Investigator.

Fighting the drug traffickers will be a top priority when Ron Hewett becomes Sheriff, because so many other crimes are caused by drugs. He wants to form a Countywide Drug Task Force to coordinate efforts of all agencies to

combat drug trafficking.

Electing Ronald Hewett Sheriff will send a warning to drug dealers to get out and stay out of Brunswick County.

Whether it's in the classroom, the courtroom or on the streets, you can depend on Ronald Hewett to be tough on those who try to sell drugs.

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