



Bay County Forest Sustainability Program

Frequently Asked Questions: The Insecticide to Control Expanding Spongy Moth Populations and Treatment Operations

What product is used to control invasive Spongy Moth caterpillars in trees?

- The Product Name is Foray 48B.
- Active Ingredient in the product is the bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki* (Btk).
- Foray is a biological pesticide that is an organic certified water-based liquid formulation.

What effects does Btk have on other organisms and the environment?

- Btk is specific to the life stage of the caterpillars that are feeding at the time of application. They must eat the product within a few days of treatment to be affected.
- Most native butterfly caterpillars are not feeding this early in the spring.
- The unique digestive systems of Spongy Moth caterpillars make Btk work. The different digestive systems of humans, pets, birds, fish, livestock, honey bees or other wildlife are not affected by Btk.
- The United States Environmental Protection Agency categorizes the risks posed by Btk to non-target organisms as minimal to non-existent.
- When the product is applied to tree leaves, it biodegrades in one to four days due to exposure to sunlight and microorganisms.
- There are no groundwater contamination concerns as Btk does not percolate through the soil beyond 10 inches (25 cm).
- The Btk bacteria applied in the pesticide does not multiply or accumulate in the environment.

How is the insecticide applied and when?

- Aerial spray application is by airplane or helicopter.
- The product is applied at a rate of 1/2 gallon of liquid insecticide per acre of tree canopy.
- The weather conditions needed for treatment operations are: wind 3-15 mph; no rain expected for 4 hours; 50% humidity.
- Treatment spray operations usually are done in early morning hours just after sun rise, around 6 A.M.
- Application is done shortly after caterpillars hatch targeting the first life stages of the caterpillar.
- Treatments are usually done in mid to late May or early June depending on weather conditions and caterpillar life stage development.

What precautions should be taken for treatment?

- It is recommended that people and pets stay indoors during the active spray operation and if possible until the Btk product is dry, up to 4 hours after treatment.
- If people or pets are inadvertently exposed to the BTK Spray, they are unlikely to experience any ill effects, no special precautions are required.
- Cars, houses, and other household articles will not be harmed by the product and residues will rinse off after a few rain events. Cars can be washed with soap and water to hasten residue removal.

Why do we use Btk?

- Btk has no known effects on non-target organisms including humans, pets, birds, fish, livestock, honey bees or other wildlife
- This product is highly effective.
- Labeled for use on Organic Farms by Organic Materials Review Institute.