

Parkway Tree Worm Infestation

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION

The 1995/96 Ventura County Grand Jury received two citizen's complaints, (96-35 and 96-53), regarding long term worm infestation of parkway trees and their dissatisfaction with the City of San Buenaventura in providing effective eradication measures.

PROCEDURES FOLLOWED

- Visited the location, conducted a visual investigation and obtained specimen samples of the worms.
- Interviewed the complainants and their neighbors.
- Interviewed the City of Ventura Parks Division Manager, Parks Supervisor and the Licensed City Pest Control Officer/Pest Control Operator.
- Interviewed an entomologist from the office of the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner.

FINDINGS

- Several cork oak trees on the block were found to be heavily infested with the California oak moth larvae (animophylus).
- Photographic evidence was provided by the complainants which revealed infestation of their front lawns, porch areas and house interiors by the oak moth larvae.
- It was discovered that the residents long ago abandoned parking their vehicles on the street in the vicinity of the infested trees in order to avoid damage to the paint.
- Pedestrians walking on the sidewalks often experienced worms attached to their hair and clothing.
- Although the City had sprayed the trees periodically with Dipel, an environmentally approved bacterium spray, this proved to be a temporary measure at best and often lost effectiveness within a few days. For maximum effectiveness, spraying can only be conducted during critical times each year.
- Some oak trees on the block have been removed and replaced with another species. However, it was not determined if this was due to worm damage.
- Most of the trees on the block appear to be heavily diseased.
- The City of Ventura Parks Department report that they have made significant changes to more effectively respond to citizen complaints and inquiries.

RECOMMENDATION

The 1995/96 Grand Jury recommends:

The City of San Buenaventura Parks Department exercise a more effective response to provide relief

to the citizens with an aggressive tree spraying program and, if necessary, replace the affected trees with a more suitable and acceptable species.

RESPONSE REQUIRED

City of San Buenaventura Parks Department