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## Conservation Corps pitches in to fight grapevine moth



Jennifer M. Howell/News-Sentinel California Conservation Corps member Ivan Mireles, of Stockton, uses a pitchfork to remove trimmed vegetation from a path at a home on Curry Road north of Kettleman Lane. On Thursday, Aug. 26, 2010, CCC members and members of the California Department of Food and Agriculture gathered for a third and final day to clear grapes, both fresh and not, as part of an eradication program to rid the area of the European grapevine moth. Also pictured is Corps member Sarah Conrad, of Modesto.



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About 25 members of the California Conservation Corps braved Lodi's heat wave this week by pulling grapes off vines east of Lodi to protect them from the European grapevine moth that threatened to plague the area.

CCC members limited their efforts to non-production grapes — those grown by property owners who aren't selling their grapes to wineries.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture recently placed 26,000 acres of grapes in Lodi, Victor, Acampo and Morada under quarantine after San Joaquin County officials found two European grapevine moths on Aug. 2 and Aug. 4.

The major target area is property within 1,300 feet of where the moths were originally found — basically Kettleman Lane east of Highway 99. CCC crews were focused this week on Curry Road between Kettleman Lane and Pine Street.

Crews removed grapes — which the moths really enjoy — and surrounding brush and stuffed them into clear plastic bags.

"We've got to make this place nicer than when we came," CCC crew member Sarah Conrad, of Modesto, said.

The grapes will be literally buried at the county landfill on East Harney Lane, said Gary Stockel, the county's assistant agricultural commissioner.

"We're thinking that stripping the grapes will be sufficient," said California Department of Agriculture spokesman Steve Lyle.

The purpose of eradicating the pest is to assure that any life stages of the moths are eliminated, Stockel added.

While the European grapevine moths enjoy grapes more than anything else, they also like "secondary" crops like peaches, nectarines, kiwi, persimmons, pomegranates, berries and cherries.

"The key thing is if you have a host plant in your yard, we ask that you not move those fruits off your property and that you consume them on your own property," Lyle said.

That means don't even bring fruits like grapes, peaches and nectarines to your neighbor's house. That could be enough to spread the moth off your property, Lyle added.

Even though the major focus is the area east of Highway 99, the county's larger quarantine area remains in effect. That area generally includes areas north to Peltier Road, east to Jack Tone Road in western Lockeford, west to Davis Road and south to the Foppiano Lane-Ashley Lane area in Morada.

Farmers planning to ship fresh wine juice are required to enter into a compliance agreement with the county, requiring them to ensure that the grapes are free of the moth, according to county officials.

Commercial farmers within the area where the moth was found in early August have already applied insecticides to their grapes, Lyle said.

Grapes are being targeted for two reasons — they are the moth's favorite plant and Lodi's grape harvest is right around the corner, Stockel said. Once the grape harvest is over, the county and state will focus on the "secondary hosts."

The moths were previously detected in Napa County in September 2009 and later in Sonoma, Solano, Mendocino, Merced and Fresno counties before reaching the Lodi area.

"At some point, we will trap and continue to monitor the situation," Lyle said. "It is difficult to say how long the quarantine will be."

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