

GYPSY MOTHS

DALE CALDWELL, M.G.C.S.A. DIRECTOR

Many of you have seen these curious little yellow boxes attached to trees around the metropolitan area this past summer. I had one attached to a tree immediately across the street from the road up to my maintenance facilities. After a few inquiries, I discovered that these were traps distributed by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in conjunction with the Department of Natural Resources, Forestry Division to trap the adult male Gypsy Moths.

After hearing and reading about how the Gypsy Moth had defoliated entire forest areas in the Eastern United States, I became interested in the project. My curiosity peaked when two officers from the DNR walked into my office late this fall seeking permission to search for egg masses on the golf course grounds. At this point I contacted the DNR for some answers to stem my concern and curiosity. The following information was related to me.

Although the number of adult male gypsy moths found this year increased by some 280% over the number found during the summer of 1980, the populations are not high enough to cause much concern. As is evidenced by the lack of damage caused by the gypsy moth caterpillar. The increase in population could be attributed to the mild winter we experienced last year. The most significant concentrations found were in St. Paul's Midway area, the Lake Phalen area and in Golden Valley.

At this point, the DNR is out looking for egg masses in these areas without finding much of anything. If large enough infestations were found, there are several things that could be done to prevent the problem from getting out of control as it did out East. Among these steps are the spraying of a bacteria into an area which would biologically regulate the insect. Another possibility would be an extremely high intensity trapping program similar to those around last summer. A third possibility would consist of a mass spraying of areas with a chemical to confuse the male insect during the mating season. With any of these programs, the key rests with the early detection of the problem. The agencies involved seem quite willing and capable to assume and maintain control at this point.

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