

Btk for Control of Gypsy Moth

Background

Gypsy Moth outbreaks can severely weaken or kill certain species of trees. Most deciduous trees can withstand one or two consecutive years of infestation but repeated leaf loss stresses and can kill trees. In the last two years, there has been increased Gypsy Moth activity in isolated pockets of oak stands throughout Toronto.

What is Btk?

Btk is a low-risk pesticide used to control Gypsy Moths and other caterpillar pests, such as the spruce budworm. Btk is made from a bacterium that occurs naturally in soil and produces a toxin poisonous to butterfly and moth caterpillars.

Does the City's Pesticide By-law allow the use of Btk?

Yes. Btk is exempt under the by-law because it is a biological pesticide. Btk is considered a safer alternative to pesticides previously used to control Gypsy Moths. For more information on pesticide use by the City, see www.toronto.ca/health or call Toronto Health Connection at 416-338-7600.

How is Btk used?

Btk can be applied by a licensed operator directly to Gypsy Moth nests with a handheld spray. It can also be applied with a helicopter or small plane. Aerial application can be a more cost effective method for large affected areas.

Is the City planning to use Btk?

The City of Toronto is planning a control program for Gypsy Moths that will include an aerial spray of Btk in two areas of Etobicoke. For more information on this program contact Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation at 416-338-TREE or visit www.toronto.ca/trees.

Is Btk harmful to humans?

The evidence suggests exposure to Btk through aerial spraying is not harmful. Some reports indicate Btk may temporarily cause mild irritation to eyes, skin, and nose in some people.

How can I reduce exposure to Btk?

If you live in an area that is being sprayed, no special precautions are necessary. If you choose, you can avoid exposure to Btk by remaining indoors during and immediately after the spraying. You can also cover patio furniture or outdoor playing areas prior to the spraying or hose them off afterward.

What is the effect of Btk on the environment?

Btk breaks down quickly in the environment and has a very low impact. It is not considered harmful to mammals, fish, birds, or other insects.

Over...

Who do I contact if I have concerns?

If you have further questions about Btk, call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600. If you have symptoms after the Btk application and are concerned, see your doctor.

May, 2007