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## **Gypsy moths back for another year**

**By Anne Danahy** Property owners in the parts of Centre County still plagued by gypsy moths can expect to see the caterpillars emerging from egg masses in the coming weeks.

Centre County gypsy moth coordinator Karl Mierzejewski said the state's spraying program will likely happen in mid-May. Landowners who aren't covered by the program or who want to give the gypsy moths a double whammy can also buy a spraying kit from a garden store.

"Now is really the perfect time," Mierzejewski said.

Once the caterpillars hatch from their yellowish, quarter-sized masses, they fall to the ground on their threads and make their way up trees. The off-the-shelf spraying kits include burlap to wrap around the tree trunks that you spray with the insecticide.

Otherwise, Mierzejewski said, the caterpillars climb to the tree tops and wait until the leaves are big enough and they're ready to start feeding.

He said he expects the gypsy moths will start hatching toward the end of April, although it could be earlier in warm, dry places.

Aerial spraying of a biological pesticide through the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources could take place in mid-May, depending on how the foliage develops.

Which parts of the county will get sprayed has already been determined.

After blanketing parts of Centre County for several years, the gypsy moth population has collapsed in many places, but is still present in some areas.

Mierzejewski said his guess is that the infestation is ending, in keeping with the typical gypsy moth pattern of hitting an area for about three years before a population collapse.

"Pockets may need to be treated next year," he said, "But it's not going to be this area-wide defoliation we had in 2007 and 2008."

*Anne Danahy can be reached at 231-4648.*