spongy moth

WISCONSIN COOPERATIVE
SPONGY MOTH PROGRAM

BTK and Butterflies

product name

Foray 48B Biological Insecticide Aqueous Suspension, containing *Bacilius thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki* (Btk)

how Btk is made

Btk is a strain of common soil bacterium that occurs naturally. It is cultured by fermenting grains and potatoes with fish or corn meal, similar to brewing beer. The final product contains 90% water, the leftover growth medium, carbohydrates, inert ingredients approved as food additives, and the active ingredient.

how Btk works

The active ingredient is a caterpillar specific protein toxin produced by bacteria when the product is fermented. The protein interacts with specific bacteria within the digestive tract of certain caterpillar species that eat it. The process kills the caterpillar within a few days.

what Btk affects

Not all species of caterpillar are affected by the *kurstaki* strain of Btk, but spongy moth, tent caterpillars, and Karner Blue butterflies are all susceptible. Spongy moth caterpillars emerge earlier than other native and migratory lepidoptera, so targeted early season treatments reduce the chance that other lepidopteran species will come in contact with products.

Btk degrades rapidly, so it only affects susceptible caterpillars that feed on treated leaves within about 10 days of it being applied. Spray plans focus on tree canopies and avoid spraying over open prairie or water. Numerous studies have documented no apparent toxicity for humans, pets, wild animals, birds, honeybees, or fish.

avoiding exposure to Btk

If you are concerned about your butterfly garden plants being sprayed, place a tarp over them the night before a spray is scheduled. Then, remove it after spraying is completed. You can see if your garden is in a spray block by going to http://spongymoth.wi.gov or call 1-800-642-MOTH daily starting in mid-May.

Due to rare cases of mild, short-lasting allergic reactions by humans, you may wish to stay indoors with the windows closed or leave the area during a spray if you have severe food allergies or chemical sensitivity.