

Emerald Ash Borer a Small Pest for Region No New Infestations Found Outside Fremont and Shipshewana

Kevin Kilbane, Ft. Wayne News-Sentinel

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

Survey crews snooping around woods and neighborhoods haven't found any new signs of the emerald ash borer in northeast Indiana, a state official said Monday.

The workers for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources' Division of Forestry also will check next month on "trap trees" - ash trees intentionally damaged to invite emerald ash borer invasion.

"I don't anticipate finding anything at this time," said Phil Marshall, the DNR Division of Forestry's forest health specialist.

The only confirmed Indiana sightings of the invasive metallic-green beetle continue to be at a campground near Fremont in Steuben County and near a sawmill east of Shipshewana in LaGrange County, Marshall said.

DNR workers hope by Sept. 25 to complete their marking of ash trees near those two sites, he said. To prevent the emerald ash borer from spreading, foresters, government officials and scientists have agreed on a policy of cutting and burning all ash trees within 1-2 mile of an infected tree.

Native to Asia, the insect came to the United States several years ago in packing material that arrived in port at Detroit. It has destroyed millions of ash trees in southern Michigan. A small infestation also resulted in the destruction of about 1,200 ash trees this spring in Hicksville, Ohio, northeast of Fort Wayne just across the Indiana-Ohio line.

The emerald ash borer typically attacks the tops of ash trees first. Its larvae chomp S-shaped tunnels as they feed on the living tissue under a tree's bark, cutting off the tree's supply of nutrients and water. Healthy ash trees can starve to death in two to three years.

The DNR had hoped to experiment with using a bloodhound to sniff for the presence of the emerald ash borer. Dawn Bale, a student at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, developed the research project involving her bloodhound, Eddie.

Bale, who works on Marshall's emerald ash borer survey crews, hoped to train Eddie to recognize the smell of waste droppings from the insects. Eddie then could be driven or walked around wooded areas to sniff for the insect's scent. Bale couldn't be reached to learn the status of Eddie's training. He has not been used yet by the DNR, Marshall said.

Marshall said DNR officials believe both Indiana infestations involve wood brought to Indiana from Michigan.

East of Shipshewana, they believe logs containing emerald ash borer probably were hauled to the sawmill there, he said. The insect might have spread from the mill in pieces of slab wood - outer layers containing bark - which people took home for firewood. The emerald ash borer typically lives in the outer 1-2 -inch of the tree.

Ash trees in a 6-square-mile area must be destroyed because the infestation spread from the area surrounding the sawmill, said Russ Grunden, a DNR spokesman. It will affect more than 300 property owners.

DNR officials believe the emerald ash borer rode into the campground near Fremont on firewood, Marshall said. The DNR removed about 425 trees there this spring and plans to take more out this fall and winter.

A combined total of about 20,000 ash trees probably will be removed from the two sites, he said. In most cases, the felled trees will be chipped up and burned.

The DNR has made special arrangements, however, for destruction of some ash trees in LaGrange County, Marshall said. Many of the trees stand on the property of Old Order Amish residents, who use wood for winter heating.

The Amish are being allowed to cut the marked ash trees and place them in firewood piles separate from other firewood, Marshall said. All ash firewood must be burned by May, when the emerald ash borer becomes active again.

The Amish also will be allowed to harvest lumber-grade ash trees slated for destruction, with the condition they burn all of the outer wood containing bark, he said.

Prevention tips

Forestry and insect experts believe the emerald ash borer frequently spreads to new areas when people transport ash logs or firewood from an infected area, such as southern Michigan. To prevent spread of the insect:

Don't move any firewood or logs to Indiana from Michigan.

If you go camping, buy firewood near the campground or state park where you are staying, and don't bring any home.

Source: Phil Marshall, Indiana Department of Natural Resources' Division of Forestry