

# Beetle pesticide scares environmentalist

From page 1

North American long-horned infestation was discovered in Brooklyn.

Black speckled with many white dots and sporting long segmented antennae, the beetle probably reached Woodbridge in packing material five or six years ago.

It can fly and has a voracious appetite for most of Canada's broadleaf trees, including maple, ash, poplar and willow. If it reaches large forested areas in Greater Toronto or beyond, authorities are warning the beetle could one day devastate tourism and the forest industry.

Of course, an "artificial spread" of the beetle may already have happened, since Steeles Avenue in Woodbridge is an urban place where insects can conceivably hitch a ride to new areas on a child's knapsack, the payload of a pickup truck or the roof of a bus, York Region chief forester Ian Buchanan said this week. The region, therefore, needs all residents to be watchful this winter around trees in their streets, backyards and parks, he said, for the beetle nibbles at

bark to lay its eggs and emerging adults leave a hole behind about the diameter of a pencil.

"It's a perfect time to go out, shake your tree and take a look for those exit wounds."

Municipal, regional and federal workers first concentrated on estimating the size of the spread, but are now taking time to spot signs of infestation less visible from the ground.

### TREES TO BE CUT

To destroy the beetles before the adults can move again next year, CFIA will cut apparent healthy trees hundreds of metres around the infested ones.

And in a further ring around the cutting area, it plans to inject soil under thousands of other trees with imidacloprid, a pesticide sold commercially as Merit or Imicide to kill grubs on lawns, fleas on pets or certain insects attacking apples, potatoes or other crops.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced plans last year to inject 120,000 susceptible trees in New York with imidacloprid in order to prevent further spread of beetles. The

pesticide has only been 30 to 70 per cent successful at this, however and cannot kill larvae inside trees, said Jon Bell, a biosurveys specialist for CFIA.

Research has shown imidacloprid is capable of killing bees and some birds, including sparrows and pigeons. It can contaminate water and is mobile and persistent in soil. In one U.S. field test, soil concentrations of imidacloprid did not decrease for a year.

Janet May, co-ordinator of the York Region Environmental Alliance, said despite federal intentions to speed approval for use of imidacloprid against the beetles in Canada, there are unanswered questions about the pesticide.

"As an environmentalist, I'm not really happy about Merit at all," she said.

*People seeking information on the Asian long-horned beetle or have seen evidence of infestation can visit the CFIA website at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca) or call the agency's hotline at 1-800-442-2342.*

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