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War against codling moth

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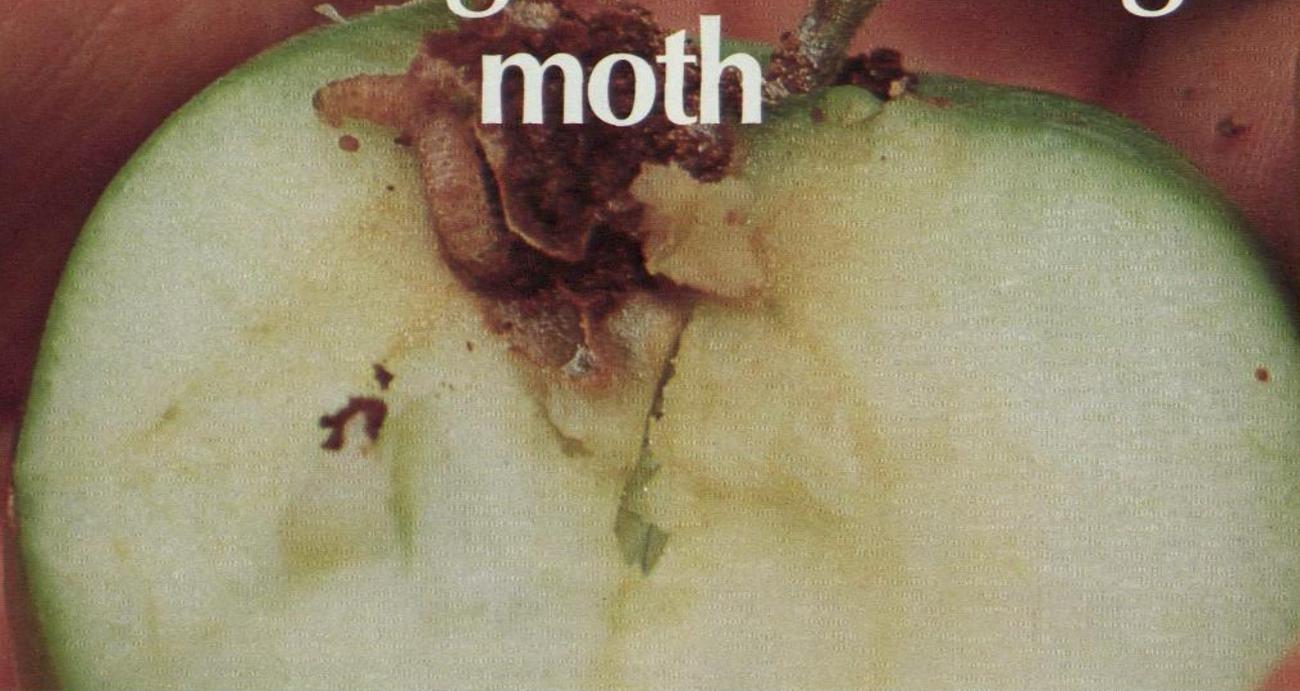
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War against codling moth



▲
Infested apple.



▲
The caterpillar leaves only a hole on the outside of fruit.

Residents of the tiny town of Bridgetown, in Western Australia's south-west, are at the front line in the campaign to eradicate an outbreak of codling moth from the State.

The tiny caterpillar of the codling moth bores into fruit, leaving only a small hole on the outside, but with tunnels leading to the core.

Throughout February, March and April 1993, residents and government agencies have been stripping fruit from all trees within the quarantined area for burial in a deep pit, and bulldozing and burning infested trees.

Trees that remain will be stripped of fruit and bark, and trunks banded with corrugated cardboard to catch moth larvae.

Quarantine checkpoints have been established on all roads leading out of the town to prevent fruit being taken out of the area.

Pheromone lure traps have been laid in fruit-growing areas between Albany and Bunbury, and in Perth fruit-growing areas, to determine whether the moth has spread.

Codling moth control officials have estimated that thousands of fruit trees will be destroyed and thousands of tonnes of fruit buried. There are at least 20,000 fruit trees within the infested area. Pome fruit, stone fruit and walnuts are affected.

The Agriculture Protection Board, Department of Agriculture, Western Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, and other agencies are involved in the eradication program. Unemployed local residents are working for the campaign.

Although only four small commercial orchards are affected, hobby farms and backyard gardens are most affected by codling moth.

The Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes will remain under quarantine for the next three years, or until the codling moth is eradicated.

Western Australia's apple industry is worth about \$35 million a year, and no apples are imported into the State because of the chances of introducing pests and diseases. If the moth gets established, orchardists will have to spray fruit trees regularly. Western Australian fruit-growers presently use less insecticide than others elsewhere in Australia.

This is only the second outbreak of codling moth in the State since 1956. That outbreak was eradicated. Control officials have tracked the source of the latest outbreak to an abandoned orchard. They believe infested fruit was brought in from the eastern States.

All Western Australian residents are asked to look out for signs of codling moth in fruit. □