

On January 14th, the Formentera Council (CiF) began a two-week push to stop the local spread of the pine processionary caterpillar. The CiF department of environment has announced its decision to extend the activity another fortnight. Councillor and department head Daisee Aguilera said the Council seeks to «cover a wider area and reduce the possibility of the pine processionary's expansion to other parts of the island».

The technique, which consists in removing the insects' nests, or 'tents', from pine trees, has been applied in Es Cap de Barbaria, the area where processionary numbers are highest. «The process», Aguilera explained, «is much more environmentally sound than the diflubenzuron fumigations proposed by the Govern during the last legislative session. That fumigation campaign was rejected by both the Council and a good part of the island». Aguilera noted that royal decree 1311/2012 (14 September 2012) and European directive 2009/128/CE prohibit such spraying except in certain cases.

The CiF has contracted two specialised forest service emloyees to deal with the spread of the invasive pest. Moreover, Aguilera announced the Council's coordination of «a group of volunteers that will remove the insects' tents from trees – manually for those located low down on the tree, and mechanically for those higher up».

Helpful hand from local hunters

The department also has the help of the Es Cap hunters' club. The hunters target nests found in pine canopies and shoot them with their rifles. To that end, the Council has purchased 2,500 cartridges at a cost of €600.

Work by the IBANAT

With help from the Formentera Council, IBANAT (l'Institut Balear de la Natura), a branch of the

Regional Ministry of Environment, Agriculture and Fishing of the Govern Balear, has also applied different techniques to eliminate the pests in trouble spots around the island.