



This Monday the Formentera Council's Office of Environment rolled out a new initiative to control an infestation on the island of an invasive caterpillar known as the pine processionary. Department head Daisee Aguilera explained that, over two weeks, a pair of professional forest service workers brought in by the administration will administer a treatment strategy based on the manual and mechanical removal —and subsequent controlled burning— of the processionary's nests, or “tents”.

As with the two previous iterations of the push, the Formentera Council is again operating in tandem with the regional ministry of environment's healthy forests service and department of natural spaces and biodiversity. Both agencies agreed to helm the campaign in response to calls from the Formentera Council, which, in their time, were fruit of the efforts of environmental organisers like hunters and beekeepers on Formentera's Consell d'Entitats and a universally-backed motion brought before the island's plenary assembly. Two other groups, the Balearic institute of nature (Ibanat) and environmental service agents (whose title is abbreviated to “AMA”), are also participating in the initiative.

As early as Monday the brigade's two forest service professionals removed roughly 400 tents from pine trees located on a swatch of land near Sa Tanca d'Allà Dins. The Council provided various hunters' groups with 2,250 ammunition cartridges; the hunters have volunteered to assist in efforts by firing at hard to reach nests high up in pine trees. Estimates put the initiative's potential cost in 2018 at four thousand euros, though that figure could change.

Public encouraged to report newly-detected nests via smart-phone app Línea Verde

Likewise, a new tab has been activated in the app Línea Verde allowing users to report the exact location of caterpillar nests they have found. The move gives islanders a direct line of communication to notify the Council about the tents so the necessary response can be adopted.

Should islanders, especially residents of Es Cap de Barbaria, come upon any of the pine processionary's nests, they are encouraged to communicate it the Formentera's Office of Environment by means of Línea Verde, a telephone call to 971 32 12 10, or an email to mbient@conselldeformentera.cat so the appropriate action can be taken.

***Bacillus thuringiensis*-based treatment**

In October 2016 a land treatment strategy was conducted using the active agent *Bacillus thuringiensis*

rather than the chemical agent

Diflubenzuron

, which was proposed in 2014 and rejected by the people of Formentera.

The application of *Bacillus thuringiensis* was successful, though improvements were limited to the country lanes and areas crews had been able to reach by vehicle. The pest's spread has made a more extensive treatment necessary, and in October of last year two air dustings of the agent were carried out over 1,500 hectares in Es Cap de Barbaria.

The immediate effects of treatment appear to be positive, with significant reductions of the nests reported in areas of the island that have been treated. In any case, though preliminary reports indicate reductions in both the caterpillar's numbers and the expanse of areas affected, Aguilera warned that "until checks of Es Cap de Barbaria have concluded, any evaluation of the various treatment strategies will be impossible". The air dustings conducted in 2017 are part of a four-year plan, and their results will be evaluated gradually as time goes by.