



At 7.30pm on Wednesday September 26, the Formentera Council's Sala d'Actes will host a gathering dedicated to educating professionals, homeowners and any other interested parties about the pest known as the pine processionary.

Head of Balearic healthy forests service Sandra Closa will use the meeting to outline the push planned for the coming month by the Formentera Council and the Govern balear.

Observers first discovered the pine processionary locally in 2007; operations to stem the pest's spread were put in place shortly thereafter.

In hopes of controlling the plague, the two administrations have opted for a new round of controls, including expanding aerial spraying of the natural pesticide.

Aerial treatment

Pine tree groves are dusted with the help of a DGPS-equipped helicopter which offers full control of how much pesticide is applied and to how wide an area. Operators use *Bacillus thuringiensis*,

a natural "phytosanitary" product (or simply a "pesticide") that is commonly found in nature on the ground and on plants. It can remain on plant leaves for multiple days and degrades naturally with exposure to UV rays.

Bacillus thuringiensis

does not harm bees and is also effective for treatment of other pests like mosquitos.

From next month a number of points on the island experiencing surging pine processionary numbers will be treated. Meteorological conditions (temperature, wind, relative humidity and rainfall) as well as the particular developmental stage of the larvae will affect when treatment is applied.

Other strategies

Another line of treatment still in place targets the nests the pest makes in winter to keep warm. Manual and mechanical forms of nest removal have been deployed as part of joint campaigns by the Balearic environment ministry (Ibanat, the ministry's nature institute, provides its own eco agents) and the Formentera Council.

An additional natural control measure involves installing sanctuaries for bats, which prey on the caterpillar in moth form.

Both Council and Govern have published brochures, currently available at several points across the island, with complete information about the pine processionary.