



ask Sam question

Dear Sam,

My wife and I were watching the TV news and there was a report about using a product called MCH, which employs pheromones (scent hormones given off by one insect/animal that affects the behavior of another) to keep the beetles from attacking our forest trees. Is this true? Does it work?

– John, Sundance, Wyoming

Dear John,

We checked with our Wyoming forestry folks about MCH and this is what they had to say. MCH (short for 3-methylcyclohex-2-en-1-one) is the encapsulated anti-aggregate pheromone used to ward off Douglas fir beetle (DFB) on Douglas fir trees. Basically, the pheromone is hung from trees and essentially communicates to other beetles that these trees have been attacked – don't come here because there isn't any room for you. It fools the beetles into believing there is no vacancy left at the inn. This product is available from two companies in British Columbia – Pherotech International Inc. (www.pherotech.com) and Synergy Semiochemicals Corp. (www.semiochemical.com). MCH is applicable for forest stands of Douglas fir in which DFB pressure is nearby. We have used this product and have found it to be reliable – for more information, go to the above Web sites. As noted, MCH is used exclusively for the DFB and not the mountain pine beetle (MPB). These companies also sell a pheromone-based product called verbenone for MPB. They have noted verbenone has had hit-and-miss results and wouldn't rely on this as the only treatment. Further, they recommend not using any of the pheromone-based products on any stands of trees less than an acre. There is not enough area treated to significantly interfere with beetle behavior. For small areas, the recommended practice is to use preventive spraying with labeled pesticides and the proper timing and rate. Check with your local Wyoming State Forestry Division office about when and what pesticides to use to protect your trees (<http://slf-web.state.wy.us/forestry.aspx>). So that's the skinny on pheromones, John!

Sincerely, **Sam**



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