

Courier -Environment Column  
submitted by Joan Spalding  
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## **Beetle Y2K Bug**

Is the Y2k bug really the “beetle” recently drawn by the Courier cartoonist? Mountain residents are concerned about the new proposed amendments to the Pest Control Act which will make 2 K or more a reality to residents who elect not to spray beetle infested trees on their property.

Recently, members of the local Kiwanis Club invited me to speak about the proposed amendments to the pest abatement law. To further understand the complexity of the problem, I invited Dave Leatherman, CSU entomologist and expert on the Mountain Pine Beetle. Dave, who came to Colorado when the last beetle infestation happened 20 years ago, vowed he wouldn't go through another beetle cycle, but he is still here in the beginning stages of what may be another serious onslaught.

This year he believes we will have 10,000 trees affected, whereas last year the third year of the cycle, only a few hundred were affected. Old growth mature trees typically 8 or more inches in diameter are the targets. People, he said, erroneously believe that the cold spell we had before Christmas killed the pine beetle. Unfortunately the beetle, he said, has a form of anti freeze in its system and will probably survive. Leatherman advised a coexistence policy with the beetle that is nature's way of rejuvenating old forests. He recommended forest thinning and selective spraying before the beetles emerge to prevent valuable trees from being affected. He also believes that “People Policy” is better than government policy. Neighbors helping neighbors, working together to remove affected trees works better than imposing fines.

However, if the beautiful pine tree in your yard is the one affected, then it's to your interest to keep the tree healthy. Unfortunately some homeowners are finding that it is easier for property owners to let their trees go and let others take them down after the beetle has flown to surrounding trees. Because of the problems caused by untreated trees, homeowner associations such as the Marshdale Homeowners Association have asked the county to put some teeth into the pest control bill.

Jefferson County attorney Lynnae Flora, is working with Lakewood legislator Scott McKay to draft the language for the bill. The summary of the bill states that the \$500 limit for trees will be removed, and the bill grants the board of County Commissioners, in addition to the Commissioner of Agriculture, the right to set civil penalties for violation of the Act. Landowners who do not pay the expenses of pest control will have a lien placed on their property.

It was emphasized emphatically that those who could not pay the entire costs would be able to pay for the cost of removal on a payment schedule. Attorney Flora

believes that these solutions to the proposed amendment will protect property values, the habitat will be protected and the burden to taxpayers would be removed.

Perhaps then, the county, knowing that the costs will be recovered, will be more proactive in the treatment of pests. And all the revenue generated within each county will be returned to individual county funds. This would eliminate the Y out of beetle removal and the 2k would be paid by the offender.

Joan Spalding is an educational consultant and a certified tree arborist. This column is provided as a service of the Evergreen Rotary Club.