

LET'S STOP QUEENSLAND FRUIT FLY



The April Edition

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COVID-19

The Goulburn Murray Valley (GMV) Fruit Fly office has responded to a surge in enquires from the public wanting to grow their own fruit and vegetables during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Home gardeners that have extended their vegetable gardens or started a vegetable garden for the first time are being reminded of the importance of fruit fly prevention.

GMV Regional Fruit Fly Coordinator Ross Abberfield reminded the community that as we continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, we must all unite to ensure we stay healthy, while also ensuring our quality food supply is protected and maintained.

“If GMV residents make the decision to grow more fruit and vegetables in their backyards, they need to know how to stop QFF infesting their produce. This means they have to instigate their own monitoring, prevention and control activities to ensure they can have clean, green produce at their fingertips and if they are unsure how to do this they can visit our website at www.gmv-qldfruitfly.com.au or contact our office,” Mr Abberfield said.

As restrictions and the many challenges they pose continue, we extend our best wishes for good health and safety to growers, residents and the broader GMV community during these challenging times.



Fruit fly monitoring, prevention and control activities are essential in protecting our fresh produce.

Fruit fly hygiene advice for growers and home gardeners

Fruit left on trees or the ground are especially susceptible to fruit fly attack and should be picked and collected from the ground to achieve good hygiene.

Fruit fly hygiene is a series of strategies that ensure fruit fly, their eggs, larvae or pupae are not left on the landscape after garden crops have been harvested and should be practiced as a priority action.

Unwanted fruit should be picked and collected from the ground before larvae can leave the fruit and pupate in the ground. This fruit must then be treated in one of the following ways to ensure the complete destruction of eggs and larvae:

- Solarise - place fruit in a plastic bag and sit it in the sun for a week;
- Freeze fruit until fruit is solid (about 2 days);
- Microwave fruit for 3-5 minutes;
- Hot water treatment – submerge fruit in water kept at above 50°C for more than 1 hour;
- Incinerate fruit;
- Fruit fermentation – some fruit may ferment naturally or after the addition of wine yeast. The alcohol that is produced will kill fruit fly (check Government/ Council restrictions);
- Submerge fruit in water for at least two weeks (put a thin layer of oil (e.g. citronella) on top to further reduce survival);
- Maceration of fruit (e.g. garden mulcher);
- Running fruit eating animals in the orchard to clean up fallen fruit (chickens, ducks, geese and guinea fowl);
- Prune fruit trees to a manageable size;
- Undertake early harvest where possible;
- Fruit stripping and plant removal – strip fruit and remove unwanted plants and replace with a non-fruiting plant.



Free tree removal program giving fruit fly the boot

Fruit fly is finding it harder to get a foothold thanks to moves to disrupt the pest's habitat through the removal and eradication of unwanted fruiting trees and plants. The free tree removal program has reduced potential breeding habitat through the removal of nearly 80,000 unmanaged fruit trees and plants since June 2017.

GMV Regional Fruit Fly Coordinator Ross Abberfield said this number is estimated to increase to approximately 90,000 by the end of the financial year. The program has allowed for the removal of unmanaged fruit trees and plants from orchards, private residences and public areas such as nature strips, roadsides, channel banks and reserves.

“We have been able to reduce potential breeding habitat by working with property owners to remove unmanaged orchards that have been non-productive for two consecutive seasons or more. These orchards are inspected by Agriculture Victoria staff to verify they meet the strict conditions necessary to qualify for the removal program,” he said.

The program allows for the removal of unwanted and unmanaged fruit trees in non-productive orchards to be removed by fully insured professional contractors at no cost to the property owner. A similar program facilitates the removal and eradication of unmanaged fruit fly habitat from private residential properties and public lands.

“Every unmanaged fruit fly host tree and plant removed means a permanent reduction of suitable habitat for fruit fly to lay eggs and breed,” Mr Abberfield said.

All tree removal works are carried out by fully insured professional contractors, in consultation with the landholder or responsible authority. The free tree removal program is available within Campaspe, Greater Shepparton, Moira and Strathogie Shires. For more information contact your participating Council's Customer Service Centre.



Population overview

QFF numbers are up this year compared with the same time last year. This increase is likely to be due to benign weather conditions in 2020 allowing more fruit to set and more flies to breed, compared with hot, dry conditions experienced in 2019.

The high numbers are due, mainly, to a few sites with very high populations biasing total results. These sites include:

- Cobram
- Echuca
- Kyabram
- Merrigum
- Shepparton
- Numurkah
- Nagambie

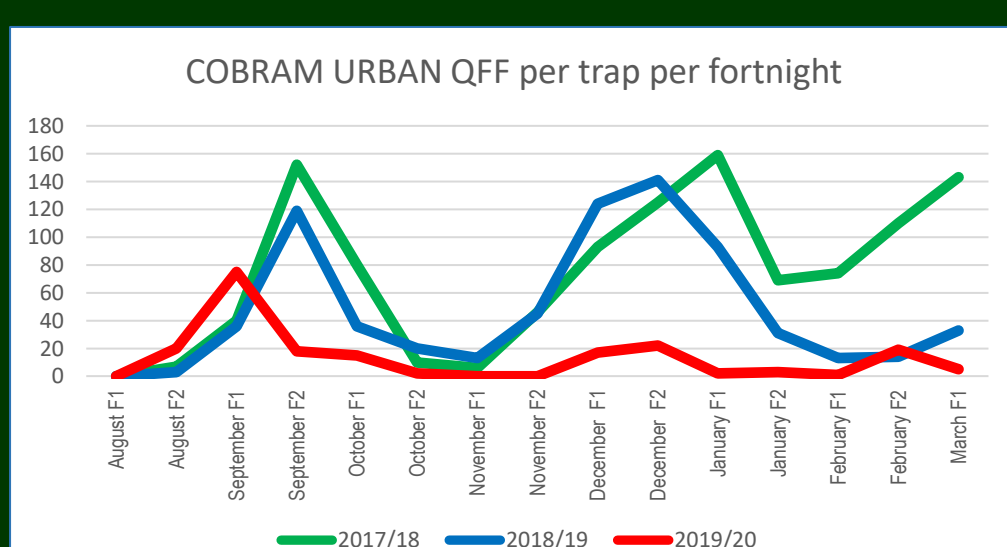
External traps, at present, are capturing many more flies than the older IKC trapping grid, particularly in just a few rogue rural sites. The Cobram Area Wide Management project, in combination with the SITplus Consortium sterile insect technique (SIT) project, has resulted in excellent QFF reduction statistics.

Cobram snapshot

There is good news for the urban areas of Cobram. Here, QFF trap numbers have reduced significantly over the last few years, particularly since the start of the sterile insect technique (SIT) project which commenced in mid-September 2019.

There are 33 traps in urban Cobram, with a marked downward trend in fruit fly numbers here, despite the recent upward trend elsewhere in the GMV.

The graph below highlights comparison of trap captures in Cobram urban sites from August to March over the last three years.



Fruit fly hotspots – commercial orchard

It is recommended that commercial orchards situated close to any of the following areas which are, at present, registering high QFF populations are ready to commence control programs (if not already implemented) – even if the crop is not yet ripening. These sites are under the highest pressure.

Dominant urban-based QFF populations occurred in:

- Echuca
- Kyabram
- Nagambie
- Numurkah
- Shepparton

Dominant rural-based QFF populations occurred in:

- Koonoomoo
- Cobram
- Kyabram
- Merrigum

DID YOU KNOW? Apples are the fruit flies food of choice at the moment. The end of the apple season is here and apples provide a food source for fruit fly as they get ready to slow down over winter.

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