

# LET'S STOP QUEENSLAND FRUIT FLY



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Inside this edition:

- Winter is the time to target evergreen trees
- Bait spray an effective control measure
- Activate control measures and stop the spread
- Increased population expected
- Control and management recommendations for growers
- Free fruit tree removal program open

## Winter is the time to target evergreen trees

Adult fruit flies are able to survive winter by taking refuge in warm spots until temperatures increase. Evergreen trees such as orange, lemon, grapefruit, feijoa, olive, loquat, guava and avocado trees located in urban and peri-urban areas or near houses and on farm buildings provide the ideal protection for Queensland fruit fly (Qfly). Regular inspection of evergreen trees over the winter months is essential and may reveal fruit fly in a slow metabolic state on the under-side of leaves.

Data from the Goulburn Murray Valley (GMV) regional trapping grid indicates higher than normal numbers of adult flies have entered the winter season and sought refuge in warm spots. Growers and home gardeners will need to act early this year to manage the expected increased Qfly pressure anticipated later in the year following the emergence of these flies from their winter slumber.

When temperatures rise above 16°C flies become active and seek out food sources and a mate to breed. Qfly monitoring traps (male-targeting para-pheromone traps) should be used to determine whether fruit fly is present on your property and in home gardens. Detection of fruit fly in monitoring traps will trigger the commencement of baiting.



## Bait spray an effective control measure

Bait spraying is environmentally friendly and has minimal impacts on pollinators and beneficial insects. A bait spray is a mixture of protein bait attractant (usually a yeast liquid), mixed with a small amount of insecticide (organic options are also available). Approximately 50ml is applied as a 'spot spray' to the trunk or foliage. There is no need to spray the whole tree as spot spraying is the necessary application method. Target loquats and late-hanging oranges to reduce first generation post-winter Qfly adults.



Female flies need to feed on protein before laying eggs. The female flies are attracted to the protein and when ingested, the insecticide kills the fly before egg laying occurs. Apply bait sprays at weekly intervals and re-apply bait immediately after rainfall of 2mm or more. Baits should be applied as high in the foliage or trunk as possible. If you do not wish to use a chemical insecticide, alternative products are available, including a natural bait spray mixture, which contains a bacterium (registered for organic use), instead of a chemical insecticide.

For more information about bait spray products and their application, contact your local hardware supplier or nursery.

## Activate control measures and stop the spread

A range of control measures remain critical in stopping the spread of fruit fly and should be applied now, despite the winter months yielding less fruit. Adult flies that survive winter will be the cause of next season's fruit fly problem.



Key tasks for home gardeners and growers include:

- Apply protein baits to crop boundaries, untended fruiting trees and crop trees before fruits mature or early in the season to reduce the fruit fly load in and near the orchard. Follow label directions and cautions.
- Commence placement of fruit fly traps and male annihilation blocks around yards and within orchards. Maintain trap placement throughout the year. Follow label directions when placing traps.
- Learn the differences between pest and non-pest fruit fly species caught in traps.
- Check for untended early fruit crops such as apricots and loquats and treat trees and fruits with the approved chemical (follow label directions and cautions), grubbing-out or fruit-stripping and destruction if required.
- Evaluate the benefits or otherwise of exclusion netting / covers

## Increased population expected

Fruit fly numbers were higher than usual last season due to the La Nina weather pattern and a shortage of harvest labour, resulting in excess fruit left on the tree and ground. It is likely that more adult flies than normal have entered the winter season as a result of these factors and if successful in surviving the winter will be the cause of increased fruit fly pressure during peak harvest periods later in the year. Extra vigilance and early action is required to manage this expected increase in Qfly pressure.

## Control and management recommendations for growers

### Prior to fruit set:

- Check for the presence of apples or quince fruit still on the tree into winter and strip and destroy all unwanted fruit.
- If there are house trees or feral trees untended that drop fruit late in autumn (plums, guavas, feijoas) there may be pupae surviving in the soil beneath or adults in surrounding broadleaf evergreens such as citrus trees.

### After fruit set and prior to harvest:

- Keep an eye on the number of pest fruit flies caught in traps. Identify the pest species and decide on how many pest fruit flies in traps will trigger action.
- Set up a list of anti-fruit fly activities based on trapped fly numbers.
- Apply cover sprays following approved label directions and repeat applications also following approved label directions.
- If there are low numbers of flies in traps and the crop is some way off ripening, bait sprays may replace cover sprays and pull the fruit fly population down prior to harvest.
- If you are registered under an Interstate Certification Assurance scheme (ICA) you must adhere to its requirements.



## Free fruit tree removal program open

The removal of unmanaged fruit trees eliminates a potential breeding ground and helps protect the region against Qfly. Property owners and home gardeners with fruit trees they no longer want or find difficult to manage, can apply to have them removed free through the Goulburn Murray Valley Area Wide Management Program's free Fruit Tree Removal Program.

The program has allowed for the successful removal of potential breeding grounds across the region, making it harder for fruit fly to get a foot hold and spread. Collect an information pack from your local participating Council and complete and return the tree removal form to have your unwanted fruit tree removed.

## DID YOU KNOW?

**Qfly do not hibernate in the ground over winter, they survive in evergreen trees where they are protected from the cold.**



Station Street, Cobram Vic 3644  
PO Box 578, Cobram Vic 3643  
t: (03) 5871 9222 f: (03) 5872 1567  
e: gmfruitfly@moira.vic.gov.au

