

LET'S STOP QUEENSLAND FRUIT FLY



June 2021

Inside this edition:

- Continued fruit fly funding – Goulburn Murray Valley Regional Fruit Fly Project
- Fruit fly population snapshot
- Sterile insect technique Cobram trial
- Rural fruit fly hotspots and activity
- Weather conditions ideal for fruit fly survival
- Free fruit tree removal program to help stop the spread

Continued fruit fly funding – Goulburn Murray Valley Regional Fruit Fly Project

Victoria's capacity to manage Queensland fruit fly (Qfly) and protect horticultural production and jobs will be reinforced with a \$6.4 million investment in the *Victorian Budget 2021/22*. As part of the budget investment, \$5.3 million will be available in grants for Victoria's three key horticultural regions – the Goulburn Murray Valley (GMV), Yarra Valley and Sunraysia.

These grants will fund Regional Fruit Fly Co-ordinators to deliver on-ground help to manage Qfly such as monitoring, community awareness programs, hot spot management and trialling of new techniques for improved management. The multi-award winning GMV Fruit Fly Area Wide Management Program, funded through the grant, has galvanised the community, industry and government to work together to stop the catastrophic effects of fruit fly and is now recognised as a leader both nationally and internationally.

The Victorian Government's work to manage Qfly will protect the 14,000 jobs supported by horticulture production across the state.

Fruit fly population snapshot

Qfly numbers remained higher than normal across the Goulburn Murray Valley region during May. This population increase was the result of the La Niña weather system providing ideal conditions for fruit fly survival, together with the effects of more unharvested and fallen fruit than usual.

Higher than normal May fruit fly numbers were due to high captures in rural locations and, to a lesser extent, peri-urban sites.

While May Qfly numbers in urban sites were slightly higher than previous years they were well down compared with rural and peri-urban sites. Individual trap captures, rather than widespread activity, skewed data with 45% of Qfly trapped in May found in 7 of the 395 traps on the grid.

The Goulburn Murray Valley fruit fly trapping grid is an essential tool for identifying hot spots, guiding the timing of Qfly management activities and evaluating the efficacy of Area Wide Management programs.

The extensive trapping grid network provides invaluable data and population insights while also allowing for historical comparisons against past population trends.



Sterile insect technique Cobram trial

Qfly numbers have declined significantly in the area of the Cobram township since September 2019 when the sterile insect technique (SIT) trial project commenced. Despite a 'bad' year for Qfly across the region and throughout much of southern, eastern and western Australia, Qfly numbers in Cobram urban areas are down significantly. When compared with Mooroopna, which has been targeted as the 'control' town (i.e. no SIT) and Tatura (also no SIT) it can be seen that 2020/21 Qfly trapping rates are higher than those for most of the previous years, whereas those for Cobram are less.



SIT is a method of pest control using the area-wide release of sterile insects to reduce reproduction in a wild-population of the same species. The release of sterile flies over Cobram aims to suppress an urban population to prevent it moving out into the surrounding horticulture.

The release of the sterile flies is part of a multi-pronged strategy that includes surveillance trapping, baiting, removal of unwanted or unmanaged host trees, and an extensive community awareness and education campaign.

Rural fruit fly hotspots and activity

The Goulburn Murray Valley trapping grid has identified the following hotspots in rural locations:

- Kyabram
- Merrigum
- Toolamba
- Ardmona
- Lemnos
- Orrvale

It appears Qfly peak occur early in urban areas, mid-season in peri-urban locations and later in rural sites. One conclusion around this pattern is that Qfly move from urban, through peri-urban and into rural locations during the season, possibly due to fruit availability. Another possible explanation is that Qfly stay in each of their natal sites and are not attracted to fruit fly traps until there are ripe or ripening fruit nearby. This hypothesis seems unlikely, however it is a question that needs to be answered as this knowledge would be useful for strategic Qfly management.

The following locations show the average number of Qfly trapped over the fruit fly period from 1 July 2020 to 21 May 2021 in urban/peri urban areas of the region, from highest to lowest.

1. Nagambie
2. Merrigum
3. Numurkah
4. Euroa
5. Congupna
6. Tatura
7. Mooroopna
8. Shepparton

It is important to note, while some areas have high averages, Qfly is not evenly spread over these 'hot spots' with high density found in a small number of locations.



Weather conditions ideal for fruit fly survival

Weather outlooks indicate conditions over coming months will be ideal for Qfly survival. Forecasts indicate higher than average rainfall, a 75-80% chance of higher than average maximum temperatures and a 75-80% chance of higher than average minimum temperatures. These predicated weather conditions are likely to result in Qfly surviving, at least this part of winter, in greater numbers than normal.

If the coming winter is not cold or dry enough, as the forecast suggests, Qfly will survive the winter by taking refuge in warm spots and become problematical in the coming spring and summer. Qfly must mate to lay eggs into ripe and ripening fruit, however only need to mate once to be able to lay eggs into many fruit over a period of up to two months. Fruit fly mate at dusk and only when the temperature is higher than about 16°C. The current weather conditions have contributed to large numbers of Qfly found in the Goulburn Murray Valley and points to the probability of the survival of large numbers through winter and into spring.

Free fruit tree removal program to help stop the spread

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 of charge 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 must mate to lay eggs into ripe and ripening fruit, however only need to mate once to be able to lay eggs into many fruit over a period of up to two months.



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

