



## March 2024

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### ***Rapid Fruit Fly Pressure Increase***

There has been a very rapid increase in the numbers of Queensland fruit fly (Qfly) trapped in the GMV during late February 2024. Weather forecasts for the GMV suggest that Qfly will not be disadvantaged in March 2024 due to the forecast of only two days that will be hotter than Qfly's thermal tolerance (32°C), plus some rain, which will keep up ambient humidity and mild days. This is a difficult time for fruit growers as Qfly populations tend to expand during autumn – just when the bulk of commercial fruit crops are ripening. Population reduction can be achieved by ramping up fruit fly management strategies, especially in irrigated gardens and crops. Continued active management is necessary to avoid population build up in autumn 2024.

### ***Qfly Hot Spots – Act Now***

Hot spots can be habitual, where they occur each year at approximately the same time or they can be “new” hot spots where Qfly have moved into a new area, settle there and proliferate.

It is essential for commercial growers to ensure that no unmanaged fruiting plants exist within about 1km of their orchard: roadside feral fruits (e.g. peaches), plants along creek banks, on Crown land, abandoned orchards and, very importantly, the house yards of your orchard and the neighbours. These fruit are the staging pints for a rapid increase in Qfly populations that would then threaten crops.

Fruit Fly AWM strategies, especially netting and host plant removal (in urban areas) and baiting (in commercial production areas) and trap monitoring and fruit checking (in all areas of the GMV) will help to manage these hot spots.

### ***Land use type***

Qfly are moving from urban areas and are now crossing peri-urban areas *en route* to the attractions of large volumes of ripening and ripe fruit in rural locations. High-level populations are still present in urban areas, though and they still are increasing there. The same situation exists in peri-urban sites and, to a lesser extent in rural areas. It is likely that urban numbers will decrease during February and start to spread through peri-urban areas and into rural commercial horticulture in response to the lure of ripening crop fruit.

### **March Weather**

The March weather forecast is favourable to the survival capability of adult Qfly. This suggests that Qfly populations may pick up during March 2024 as adult Qfly in refuge during January and early February re-enter crops and eggs, larvae and pupae mature to adulthood while weather conditions improve for them. It is important that community, industry and government actively engage in Qfly reduction strategies to reduce the impact of Qfly in the GMV later in the season.

### **Workshops and Events**

A 'managing Qfly workshop' was hosted by Windermere Recovery Support in response to requests by victims believing the 2022 GMV floods exacerbated the fruit fly problem in the 2023-24 fruit season. Fruit Fly Program Coordinator Ross Abberfield conducted an interactive fruit fly workshop at Kids Town Mooropna on **6<sup>th</sup> of March** that was well received and generated requests for community workshops farther afield.

**Did you know** that floods may benefit fruit fly because very wet weather will cause significant increases in relative humidity and, as a result, bacterial, fungal and yeast growth. These organisms are food for adult fruit flies. Warm daily minimum temperatures associated with wet weather also favour the survival of adult fruit flies as well as eggs, larvae and pupae.

If eggs and larvae are inside infested fruit that has fallen on to the ground and are then flooded it will take several days (as many as 5 days) before water will penetrate fruit to impact eggs and larvae. In effect, flooding for fewer than 5 days will not impact egg and larval survival adversely.

It is estimated that to achieve 100% mortality, Qfly pupae would need to be held under water for more than 8 days. Adult Qfly have a very significant survival instinct and are well able to move away from rain and into protective coverage.

Ross Abberfield and the 'NO FLIES ON US!' program joined the Numurkah Lions and Rotary Clubs, the Numurkah Community Centre, Cobram and District Fruit Growers Association, Goulburn Water and Moira Shire in creating awareness, education and engagement in the community to tackle the scourge of fruit fly in Numurkah at the Baala Creek Festival on Saturday the **16<sup>th</sup> of March**.

Local food, produce and activity stalls, kid's entertainment, live music and fireworks created a carnival atmosphere and the Regional Fruit Fly Coordinator, Ross Abberfield, engaged with patrons providing advice and support to take action to reduce the damage that the pest is causing home gardeners and commercial growers.



Interactive fruit fly training workshops were also conducted for staff at **Bunnings Shepparton on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March and Bunnings Yarrawonga on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March**. The Coordinator educated staff about fruit fly and how to assist customers by providing best practice advice on pest identification, how to interrupt the Qfly life cycle, traps for purpose and monitoring, crop hygiene and protection and also strategies and products to control Qfly and protect produce from infestation. Further staff workshops are proposed for all Bunnings Stores within the GMV region.

### Fruit fly control and management

For more information of fruit fly control and management visit [www.fruitflycontrol.com.au](http://www.fruitflycontrol.com.au) or scan the QR code. For assistance in managing fruit fly, contact the Goulburn Murray Valley Fruit Fly Office by phoning 03 5832 5202 or email [fruitflycontrol@shepparton.vic.gov.au](mailto:fruitflycontrol@shepparton.vic.gov.au)



Information Packs Available From  
Customer Service:

- Campaspe Shire Council
- Greater Shepparton City Council
- Moira Shire
- Strathbogie Shire Council
- Berrigan Shire Council

#### GMV REGIONAL FRUIT FLY PROGRAM



GMV Queensland Fruit Fly actions are funded by the Victorian Government Fruit Fly Regional Grants Program