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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. Bait spray 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 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



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.



Area Wide Management Activities

The 2024 Summerfruit Conference was held at the Tatura Conference Centre on Wednesday 24 July followed by an industry dinner at the Parklake featuring guest speaker, football legend Gary Ayres and a Research and Development Field Day at Tatura Smart Farm, Tatura on 25 July.

Presentations throughout the conference included Market Access updates, Supply Chain reports, the Fresh and Secure Trade Alliance, Market Issues, Food Waste, Biochar, Fair Farms employment practices, Victoria' prospectus on Planning our Basin Future, Narrow Orchard Systems for Future Climates and Precision Summerfruit Orchards.

Guest Speaker Garry Ayres was instrumental in achieving 5 Premierships, won 2 Norm Smith Medals, was Captain/Coach of numerous AFL Teams and his peers honoured him by creating the AFL Garry Ayes Medal. Key to his achievements was his belief that generating supporter, player and sponsor ownership and sustainability relied on success (which breeds further success).

Garry and Ross agreed that reducing the impact of fruit fly in the GMV region depended upon the program establishing itself as a leader in the field and uniting the regional community, industry and government to fight fruit fly.

As the most successful fruit fly program in Australia, the GMV program galvanised over 3000 volunteers to remove over 100,000 unmanaged fruit tree's and reduce fruit fly populations by 60% across the region. Industry leaders from Summerfruit Australia Ltd, the National Fruit Fly Council, the Fresh and Secure Trade Alliance, Fruit Growers Victoria and Cobram and District Fruit Growers Association agreed that continued support from the Victorian Government was necessary to continue to reduce the economic impact of fruit fly in the GMV, otherwise, it would return to what it was prior to the successes of program.



GMV Fruit Fly Coordinator Ross Abberfield with Penny Measham - Fresh and Secure Trade Alliance), Russell Fox – National Fruit Fly Council, Garry Ayes – Guest Speaker, Charlotte Brunt and Trevor Ranford CEO – Summerfruit Australia Ltd at the conference dinner.

On 26 July 2024 Ross Abberfield conducted a community fruit fly workshop in Numurkah, organised by Toni Makin from Kaarimba Gardening Friends. All aspects of managing fruit fly in backyard gardens were discussed, with particular interest in the huge variation of fruit and vegetables that are attacked by fruit fly. Attendees expressed interest in the free unmanaged fruit tree removal program and many unmanaged fruit trees located on public lands in the Numurkah area, were noted by the coordinator for his attention.

After the interactive workshop, everybody enjoyed the delightful afternoon tea that was provided by the Kaarimba ladies.



Ross Abberfield with attendees at the Kaarimba Gardening Friends workshop.

On 31/07/2024, Ross Abberfield conducted an industry fruit fly workshop at the Cobram and District Fruit Growers Association (CDFGA), organised by CDFGA General Manager Karen Abberfield and facilitator Bob Currie. Horticultural workers were educated about the life cycle of fruit fly, economic impact, overwintering, integrated pest management and the united role that the community, local and state government play in reducing the impact of unmanaged fruit fly populations on commercial fruit and vegetable producers.



Ross Abberfield with Bob Currie and attendees at the CDFGA workshop in Cobram.

Did you know?

Adult Qfly are very adept at finding warm spots on the landscape as refuges to wait out the winter in the GMV. Such refuges may be several degrees above the temperatures being presented by the Bureau of Meteorology due to active winter heating of households, factories, packing sheds, etc and passive heating from animal shelters, compost heaps and natural heat sinks.

Qfly is also very adaptable to new climatic conditions. Up until the late 2000s Qfly there were only intermittent Qfly outbreaks in all but the East Gippsland areas of Victoria. Now, Qfly has become established over most of the State with a few exceptions. Data from Agriculture Victoria Queensland Fruit Fly Trapping Grid show that adult Qfly are captured throughout the whole year – winter included – in many parts of the GMV. Cold weather patterns and frosts that have occurred here in the past 10 years have not killed off Qfly.

Qfly has become acclimatised to winter conditions in the GMV and Qfly populations have become established.

FRUIT FLY CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT

For more information of fruit fly control and management visit 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



Information Packs Available From
Customer Service:

Campaspe Shire Council
Greater Shepparton City Council
Moirra Shire
Strathbogrie 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