

QUEENSLAND FRUIT FLY GROWER'S UPDATE

Spring buds swelling and fruit flies stirring

Vigilance is required throughout spring in order to avoid Queensland Fruit Fly (QFF) population explosions in

December and January. Measures such as trapping, fruit inspection, host removal, baits, netting, pruning, windfall clean-up and use of approved pesticides where appropriate should be implemented now and will help reduce future population increases.

September outlook

The optimum situation for fruit fly survival into spring is for September to receive above-average rainfall and above-average maximum and minimum temperatures. This situation occurred in the winter of 2016 which resulted in extremely high spring, summer and autumn populations in central and northern Victoria.

Although temperatures may rise slightly when compared with the average, the lack of extra rainfall will not be sufficient for a mass-scale overwintering event. However, this may change if September rains and temperatures increase. Urban sites may be susceptible to higher QFF overwintering levels as they are typically warmer and more humid than rural locations.

Likely September activity

September rainfall and temperatures are unlikely to be significantly different from the average. This suggests that as temperatures are on the rise the numbers of QFF surviving over winter will not decrease due to weather. Numbers may go down as a result of predation (birds, insect predators). Added to that, QFF populations have gone down in the Goulburn Murray Valley over the last few years so the level of QFF inoculum (the base for the next QFF population explosion) is relatively small. The ability for males and females to find each other to mate is decreased unless groups of them are overwintering together.

While this low level of inoculum is good news, the community cannot afford to be complacent. Despite reduced QFF populations a significant upsurge in their first post-winter generation and subsequent generations can result if fruit fly manage to find each other, the temperature at sunset (mating time) is high enough (16°C) and there are ripe or ripening host fruit such as loquats, winter oranges available.

Jobs to undertake now

September is the time to start checking fruit for sting marks, setting traps for monitoring purposes and ensuring you have adequate control material in stock and on-hand. Removal of unwanted fruiting plants or pruning them to manageable/nettable height are also good strategies.

Until sunset temperatures reach the mating threshold of 16°C there will be no QFF egg-laying although there will be an upsurge in the numbers of male fruit flies being found in traps in late September. There will be patches that will reach this mating threshold in September. This is more likely to occur in urban situations as QFF overwinter there in greater numbers. These sites are potential QFF 'hot-spots'.

For more information on QFF control, collect an information pack from your Council's Customer Service Centre.

Funded by the Victorian Government's Managing Fruit Fly Regional Grants Program

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Let's stop Queensland
Fruit Fly

