

Monday, September 21, 2009

## FRUIT FLY PROGRAM TO RESUME

With warmer spring days upon us, Queensland fruit fly will soon become active again in northern Victoria.

Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Senior Regional Plant Standards Officer Harvey Cleaver advises that fruit flies will soon emerge from shelter to look for fruit for food and to lay eggs.

“Queensland fruit flies prefer ripe or nearly ripe fruit to lay their eggs in, because green fruits are too hard,” Mr Cleaver said.

“Citrus is the main target for fruit flies at this time of year, particularly old, ripe fruit from last season.”

Mr Cleaver said the public could play a major role in controlling this pest by disposing of old and fallen fruit in home gardens plus harvesting and consuming fruit as soon as it ripens – leaving no ripe fruit on trees.

“These practices deprive fruit fly of sites to lay their eggs and if widely followed will help to keep fruit fly numbers low during the coming season,” Mr Cleaver said.

Starting this month, DPI is again releasing dyed pink, sterile fruit flies, which were part of the extensive eradication program undertaken following the detection of fruit flies in Yarrawonga last season.

“After mating with the distinctively coloured sterile flies, wild female flies do not lay viable eggs and the breeding cycle is broken,” Mr Cleaver said.

Mr Cleaver said the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) releases would continue for several weeks.

“Households in the area of last season’s fruit fly detection will be visited over the next few weeks by DPI and will conduct general hygiene work,” Mr Cleaver said.

“DPI would like to thank Yarrawonga residents again for their cooperation during the eradication program and remind everyone that the sterile fruit flies present no health risk to humans or animals.

“We ask households to start thinking about the maintenance of their backyard fruit trees, including pruning trees to a height where fruit can be easily picked or even removing unwanted trees completely.

“There is a strong relationship between fruit fly outbreaks and poorly-maintained backyard fruit trees, therefore it is important that these trees are managed correctly.”

To kill any fruit fly eggs or maggots in the fruit prior to disposal in the rubbish bin, unwanted fruit can be stewed, frozen for two days, or placed in a sealed plastic bag and left in the sun for several days.

**Media contact:** Sarah Hetherington, DPI Media and Communications Adviser  
Phone contact: 5833 5361 Mobile: 0409 405 639

Home-grown fruit should not be removed from the property unless it has been cooked.

“By following these practices, residents will greatly assist DPI to complete the eradication activities in Yarrawonga and help prevent fruit fly populations from strengthening during spring and summer,” Mr Cleaver said.

“With school holidays upon us DPI is also reminding travellers not to take fruit with them into the Fruit Fly Exclusion Zone (FFEZ) or the Greater Sunraysia Pest Free Area within the FFEZ.

“Yarrawonga, which lies within the FFEZ, is a prime tourist holiday destination and residents can help by educating visitors not to bring produce in from outside the Zone.

“Fruit should be consumed before entering these zones, or placed in the roadside bins provided.

“Random roadblocks may be operating in some areas and substantial fines can apply if uncertified host produce is taken into an exclusion zone.”

Any fruit that is able to host fruit fly, must not be taken out of the Permanent Fruit Fly Zone, where the pest has been established for many years, into other parts of Victoria.

Further information is available from the DPI Customer Service Centre on 136 186 or the DPI website at [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/psb](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/psb)

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