

Friday, 1 February 2008

QUEENSLAND FRUIT FLY FOUND AT ASCOT VALE

Queensland fruit fly has been detected at Ascot Vale in Melbourne's inner north-west.

Department of Primary Industries Senior Plant Standards Officer Gary D'Arcy said the pest was found in a suburban home garden.

"A 15km suspension zone has been established around the detection site and DPI will conduct a pest eradication program within that area," Mr D'Arcy said.

"This will include the removal of fruit from selected trees and the application of baiting treatments to attract and eradicate the pest.

"A leaflet describing the program is being delivered to affected households.

"Householders can aid the eradication program by providing easy access to their backyards and by not removing any home-grown fruit from their properties."

Queensland fruit fly is the world's worst pest of fruit. The larvae eat fruit from the inside and make it inedible, but the fruit may appear perfect from the outside.

Wherever it becomes established, it reduces the availability of edible fruit.

Mr D'Arcy said that most fruits (including stone fruit, citrus, berries, tomatoes, capsicums and chillies) are hosts of Queensland fruit fly and the warm weather in Melbourne at this time of year provides optimum conditions for egg-laying and larval development.

The suspension zone will remain in place for at least three months and the price of fruit will not be affected.

"The detection of fruit fly is expected to have a small impact on growers as fruit to be exported interstate may have to be shrink-wrapped if it enters or leaves the suspension zone," Mr D'Arcy said.

"For example, fruit purchased in unsealed boxes or pallets at the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market for export to South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia will need to be treated – a practice many wholesalers already undertake.

"The vast majority of commercial fruit within the zone is already certified and can easily pass out of the suspension zone. Certified produce that arrives into the Market already shrink-wrapped can be re-consigned to other states provided the wrap is not broken.

“DPI is currently working with our interstate colleagues to ensure trade continues and identify any additional requirements.”

Mr D’Arcy said the detection of fruit fly highlights the need for vigilance by residents across Victoria.

“It is important for residents to look after their fruit trees and not allow ripe fruit to remain on the tree or on the ground below,” he said.

“It’s also timely to remind residents not to bring host fruit back from holidays, especially when travelling home from Queensland and northern New South Wales.”

For those seeking further information please call the DPI Customer Service Centre on 136 186.