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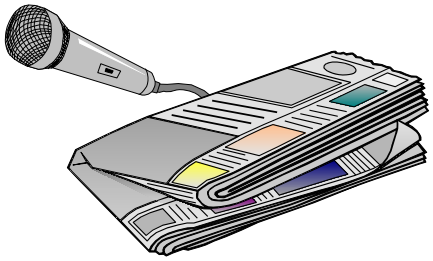
Agriculture Home Economics 4-H

GLENN COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION NEWS FLASH



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Extension Notes By: William Krueger, University of California Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor

OLIVE FLY INFESTATION INCREASES TO CRITICAL LEVELS

Olive fly populations in the Northern Sacramento Valley olive producing areas have increased dramatically this year, reports Bill Krueger, University of California Farm Advisor for olives in Glenn and Tehama Counties. This infestation is considered a major threat to the continued survival of the local table olive industry. Bell Carter Olives in Corning quit accepting olives from the Oroville area due to high levels of infested fruit. Numerous infestations have been detected in Glenn and Tehama Counties and Bell Carter and Musco Family Olives, the primary olive canners in California, report having received infested fruit from the area.

The olive fly inserts eggs into the olives which hatch into maggots that tunnel into the fruit, creating a cavity underneath where the olive was stung. Feeding by the maggot can result in associated fruit decay. When inspecting fruit suspected to be infested, you may notice small sunken "scabby areas on the fruit." Closer inspection of these suspected fruit will reveal a feeding cavity under these areas, and if enough fruit are inspected you will probably find maggots, pupae or old pupal cases. Unlike many other types of insect damage, olive fly damage may not be readily apparent from the outside of the fruit and infested fruit is extremely difficult to reliably sort out. Olive canners are extremely concerned about the potential negative

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impact that undetected infested fruit could have on their ability to market their product. This has resulted in zero tolerance on the part of canners for olive fly infested fruit.

In 1998 olive fly was discovered in Southern California. By 1999, it had spread to Tulare County and the South Coast. By 2000, the infestation had moved up the coast and by 2001 olive flies were trapped in the Northern Sacramento Valley. It is currently believed to be whereever olives are grown in California. Infestations in Southern California and coastal areas have increased to the point where it is now difficult to find uninfested fruit in areas that have not been treated to control the fly. People who used to harvest olives for home curing in these areas are now unable to do so. Prior to this year, it was hoped that high summer temperatures (reported to discourage olive fly development in the Mediterranean countries) would discourage rapid population development in the central valley. This year's rapid population development, despite a very warm summer is reason for concern.

In 2002, olives produced in Glenn and Tehama Counties had a value of more than 22 million dollars. The table olive industry is an important part of the economy in the two counties and is responsible for many, many local jobs.

In some parts of Europe, olives cannot be grown for table consumption because of the inability to economically control olive fly. To keep that from happening here will require a concerted area-wide effort on the part of everyone involved. Research has shown that the olive fly is a strong flyer, capable of rapid disbursement. Pest Control Districts have been formed in Glenn and Tehama Counties for the purpose of suppressing olive fly populations. Activities of the pest control district in Glenn County, so far, have included spraying of roadside trees, placement of attract and kill traps in urban areas, educational activities, and monitoring of fly population development. Growers are responsible for control of the pest in their orchards.

If fly populations are allowed to go uncontrolled in non-commercial trees or abandoned orchards, this reservoir of infestation will increase the pressure on commercial trees and make it extremely difficult and expensive to achieve the level of control that is required by the canners.

The biological insecticide, GF 120 Naturalyte Fruit Fly Bait from Dow Agro Sciences is available to commercial growers under a section 18 emergency exemption for control of olive fly. It is recommended that

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spraying be started at pit hardening (late June) and continued at least at two week intervals through harvest. A full registration, which would make it available to homeowners, is being pursued for this material. A registration for an attract and kill trap is also being pursued. This method could be particularly valuable for home orchards or people with a few trees.

Methods of control currently available to non commercial growers would include: 1. Elimination of fruit and or sanitation. The olive fly requires olives to complete it's life cycle. Removal of the fruit, by spraying at full bloom to prevent fruit set with products such as Florel or Liqui-Stik Concentrate 200 will break the life cycle by eliminating fruit. Olives left on the tree or ground can result in continuing development of more generations of olive fly. Unused fruit, left on the tree or fallen fruit, should be removed and disposed of in landfills or buried. 2. Removal of the trees. This is a sure, economical way to be sure that your trees don't contribute to the problem and should be considered if you are unable or unwilling to take other steps necessary to control this pest.

For more information on controlling the Olive Fruit Fly, you may want to attend a meeting that is planned for November 17, 2003, at Memorial Hall, 327 Fourth Street in Orland. This meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. For more information on the meeting or olive fly, you may contact the Farm Advisor's Office at 865-1107 or the pest control districts through the Glenn or Tehama County Agricultural Commissioners office at 934-6501 or 527-4504 respectively.

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