



Fruit Fly services continue

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Key Messages:

1. Agriculture Victoria commits \$441,000 for continued Queensland fruit fly (QFF) management on the Victorian side of the greater Sunraysia area until June 2019;
2. The QFF management program has been auspiced by the Mildura Rural City Council on behalf of the local horticulture industries and covers Swan Hill and Gannawarra Shire Councils;
3. Services to the community provided under the QFF program include:
 - Free* QFF host tree removal from home gardens;
 - Hot spot investigations;
 - Advice to land owners on how to manage fruit fly;
 - Information sessions for the general community and growers;
 - Seasonal reminders and regional trends;
4. QFF are active now so protect your fruit and vegetables today.

Following a recent announcement by Victorian Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes MP of the commitment of \$441,000 to help fight QFF in the region, the Regional Coordinator of the Queensland fruit fly management program, Deidre Jaensch, said she is “really pleased that this funding will allow continued assistance to be provided to Victorian residents in the region. There has been a great momentum built over the last 18 months but we still have a long way to go.”

Due to a change in government funding arrangements Mildura Rural City Council took on the role of auspicing the program in early December to ensure the continued work of the Greater Sunraysia Pest Free Area organisation.

“Fruit fly is very much a community problem, requiring a whole-of-community approach,” Mildura Mayor Simon Clemence said.

“As municipal leaders, Council certainly has an important role to play, and this new arrangement will ensure support continues to be provided to industry and the general community, particularly during the critical fruit-growing summer months.”

Services provided to the community under the QFF program will extend to neighbouring municipalities including Swan Hill and Gannawarra Shire Councils and include: Free* QFF host tree removal from home gardens; Hot spot investigations; Advice to land owners on how to manage fruit fly; Information sessions for the general community and growers; Seasonal reminders and regional trends.

Ms Jaensch said reports from the community have been both good and bad with some people saying it’s the first time in years that they’ve been able to pick clean fruit. On the flip side there have been daily reports of infested fruit from across the region.

Warm, humid and sheltered conditions provided by irrigated gardens are ideal for QFF to rapidly multiply and spread.

“This season is panning out to be similar to what we saw last year, when the fly numbers started off very low in Spring and then skyrocketed in December with the summer storms,” Ms Jaensch said.

“We need to remove any stigma associated with QFF and encourage our friends, family and neighbours to seek the information they need and to take action.”

Field officers have been busy over the last 12 months trying to increase community awareness by knocking on doors at over 7,600 properties. Ms Jaensch said “We have also provided one-on-one advice to more than 950 people at local markets, grower forums, and community events.”

“People are gradually developing the knowledge and skills they need to prevent fruit fly attack and it is encouraging to hear their success stories,” Ms Jaensch said.

“Clean fruit comes at a cost and many people underestimate the time and money that goes into controlling QFF effectively.”

In the last 18 months close to 5,000 trees were volunteered for removal under the free tree removal program by home gardeners who decided it was too much effort.

“We have a target of 6,000 host trees to be removed by 30th June 2019. Tree removal provides a huge relief for home gardeners in that they no longer have to worry about having to bag the infested fruit and clean up the mess,” Ms Jaensch said.

If you live within Victoria between Kerang and Yelta, in an urban home or residential property in a rural area (non-commercial), and you no longer wish to manage for fruit fly please ring to take advantage of the free* tree removal program (03) 5022 0327. *Conditions apply.

Summer fruit and vegetables at risk of hosting QFF include: apricots, peaches, nectarines, plums, cherries, grapes, avocados, figs, strawberries, tomatoes, capsicums, eggplant and chillies.

Key reminders for Summer control:

- Best results are achieved by using many strategies.
- Start control 6 – 8 weeks before picking time because QFF can sting fruit when green and hard.
- Cover your fruit tree or vegetables with an insect net (2mm weave). An old mesh curtain or paper bags may be a cheaper option. This is the best way to stop fruit fly from stinging the fruit and laying eggs in your home produce.
- Spot spray weekly using bait sprays (protein food source plus insecticide) and re-apply sprays after rain.
- Install MAT (male annihilation technology) devices such as amulets and wicks to target male flies and disrupt the mating process.
- Install protein (food source) traps e.g. yellow Biotrap and Cera traps to capture hungry juvenile flies. Note: once a female fly has mated and is full of eggs they are less interested in food and more interested in finding somewhere to lay eggs, so it is best to get them before they mature.
- Pick fruit as it ripens and don't leave any fruits to over-ripen on the tree and dig out vegetables plants as soon as they have finished.
- Collect infested fruit into a sealed plastic bag or drum and leave in the sun to kill any larvae.
- To find out more visit www.pestfreearea, and follow our facebook @Greater Sunraysia Pest Free Area for general information and seasonal reminders.
- Phone 5022 0327 to take advantage of our free tree removal program.