

Kern/Tulare

GWSS Update



A project of the Glassy-winged Sharpshooter Task Force of Kern and Tulare Counties. Participants: Agricultural Commissioner Offices of Kern and Tulare Counties, California Department of Food and Agriculture, University of California-Cooperative Extension, U.S. Department of Agriculture (APHIS and ARS Divisions).

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Ventura County gears up for busy anti-GWSS season

Ventura County, adjoining Kern County's southern border, is gearing up for an intensive spring and summer battle against the glassy-winged sharpshooter (GWSS).

"It's a busy time for us," says Ventura County's Deputy Agricultural Commissioner Alan Laird.

Officially considered a GWSS-infested area, Ventura County operates three major programs aimed at managing the pest. A fourth and brand-new effort is scheduled to start in May or June. Although Ventura County lacks the grape interface found in the San Joaquin Valley, its numerous ag commodities and concern about GWSS propel its efforts to control the pest's spread.

Nursery inspection. Plant and tree nurseries are a big business in Ventura County, accounting for gross sales of \$171.7 million in 2001. As part of the State of California's anti-GWSS efforts, the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner's Office must certify that all nursery containers and flats destined for shipment north of the area are free of GWSS life stages.

The county's nursery stock runs the gamut from azaleas to box trees to hibiscus.

"The host list is incredible for GWSS," Laird says. "We have 15 people who are inspecting 20 shipping nurseries every day. In March, we did 853 inspections on 450,000 containers and flats."

Bulk citrus regulations. Another aspect of Ventura County's GWSS program involves a state regulation to monitor bulk citrus shipments to Kern, Tulare and Fresno Counties and parts of Riverside County, where major packinghouses prepare just-harvested lemons and oranges for shipping and marketing. Ventura County, with nearly 26,000 acres of lemons, ships the yellow citrus fruit almost year-round.

The Ag Commissioner's office works to ensure that GWSS mitigation measures have been implemented, either before or after harvest.

"We have some growers who opt for mechanical brushing of the fruit for GWSS," Laird says. "The Bee Sweet Citrus Packinghouse in Fresno County is doing a lot of that. It's labor intensive and time consuming, but it's satisfactory for cleaning up the fruit."

Others are relying on post-harvest Evergreen® treatments applied by foggers in sealed coolers or "sweat rooms." Evergreen belongs to a group of widely used—and considered environmentally friendly—insecticides known as pyrethrins.

He points out that the county's bulk citrus movement procedures have been improved since Kern County's suspension last July of all bulk citrus shipments from Ventura County. Numerous interceptions of GWSS-infested loads of bulk citrus had prompted the suspension.

"This is the second year of our bulk citrus movement regulations," Laird says. "Our procedures and operations were tweaked in September and October to improve them over last year's. This season has resulted in zero rejections of our fruit."

Ventura County GWSS Pilot Program. The Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner's Office also administers a program to reimburse citrus growers in Ventura County for controlling GWSS. The program is a cooperative project among USDA, CDFA and the County Agricultural Commissioner's Office.

Documentation, including compliance agreements, is necessary. So far, Laird says, his office has 20 pest control operators and growers under compliance. "We expect many more citrus growers will be involved in the program," he says.

New nursery treatment program. Beginning in May or June, Ventura County

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—Alan Laird,
Ventura County
Deputy Agricultural
Commissioner

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nurseries that ship nursery stock to GWSS non-infested areas may be eligible for treatment reimbursement by the State of California.

The \$600,000 in funds, approved by the PD/GWSS State Board, will make it possible for the county to coordinate the GWSS battle not only in citrus groves but inside plant and tree nurseries as well. Laird expects nursery operators, especially those in the Santa Paula, Fillmore and Piru areas, to

be able to use materials such as Admire®, Marathon® and Tame® to control GWSS adults and nymphs.

“However, some nurseries may decide not to make these applications because, in some areas of the county, we are seeing reduced GWSS pressure this year, compared to the last two or three years,” Laird says.

Laird can be reached at alan.laird@mail.co.ventura.ca.us.

— Catherine Merlo

Still time to register for GWSS/PD workshop

Organizers say the response to the Glassy-winged Sharpshooter/Pierce’s Disease Workshop, set for April 22 in Napa, Calif., has been enthusiastic—and it’s not too late to register.

The registration fee is \$75, and includes lunch. The conference will run from 8 a.m. to around 5:30 p.m.

A block of room is being held at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Napa at a special

rate of \$125 a night. For reservations, call (707) 253-9540.

To register or learn more, call Carol Lerner at UC Riverside at (909) 787-5089 or e-mail carol.lerner@ucr.edu.

The complete agenda and sponsors are posted at www.ucbugdr.ucr.edu.

Continuing credits for PCAs will be available.

CDFA’s PD/GWSS Board to meet May 6

CDFA’s Pierce’s Disease/Glassy-winged Sharpshooter Board will meet Tuesday, May 6 in Sacramento.

The meeting starts at 1 p.m. in Room A-477 of CDFA’s offices at 1220 N Street.

Speakers will include CDFA Secretary Bill Lyons, Jr.; Dana Merrill, chair of the PD/GWSS Board, and Bob Wynn, statewide coordinator for CDFA’s Pierce’s Disease Program.

For more information, visit:
<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/phps/pdcp/gwTFMeet.htm>.