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Kern/Tulare

GWSS Update



A project of the Glassy-winged Sharpshooter Task Force of Kern and Tulare Counties. Participants: Agricultural Commissioner's 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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Four counties report GWSS finds this month

Sonoma, Monterey, Santa Clara and San Luis Obispo Counties have all rejected incoming nursery plant shipments in the past two weeks after inspectors found viable glassy-winged sharpshooter (GWSS) egg masses on arrivals from Southern California.

The rejected shipments were immediately returned to the originating shippers, confirmed Greg Morris, program supervisor with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA).

The GWSS discoveries "show the inspection process is working," Morris said.

Nursery stock is considered a high-risk commodity for spreading GWSS. Under CDFA supervision, nurseries and county agriculture departments visually inspect plant shipments for the pest's presence.

Morris attributed the seeming flurry of GWSS findings to last month's warm weather in Southern California, which may have spurred rapid sharpshooter development. But Morris also pointed to an increase in the number of shipments this year.

Last year, CDFA monitored 72,600 nursery plant shipments, the second highest ever, in its GWSS oversight program. Of those, GWSS life forms were found on only 81, a 99.89 percent compliance rate, Morris said.

"At this time last year, we had 21 problem shipments, compared to nine this year," he added.

The increase in shipments reflects the upsurge in demand for nursery plants as housing developments expand in Northern California and more "big-box" stores appear, Morris said.

Quick response. The single GWSS find in Sonoma County was its first this year. Nursery inspectors discovered the egg mass on a photinia plant arriving in Rohnert Park March 9. "We sent it back to the shipper in Southern California that night," said Priscilla Lane, senior agricul-



(PHOTO: CATHERINE MERLO)

tural biologist with the Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner's Office.

Lane said her office immediately called all surrounding counties after the GWSS discovery to alert them.

"This tells us that we have to be real careful with our inspections," Lane said. "The GWSS problem is not going away."

While CDFA confirmed the Santa Clara County find as a viable egg mass, the life stage was more advanced, said Eric Wylde, a supervising agricultural biologist with Santa Clara County's Division of Agriculture.

"In conversation with the entomologist who made the determination, the nymphs contained in the sample were acknowledged," Wylde said. "Several of our staff watched through a dissecting scope as two of the nymphs cracked the egg case until they pulled free of the case.

"We can't let our guard down," added Wylde. "We need to be vigilant."

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(PHOTO: MONTEREY AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE)

Not far from these Edna Valley vineyards, San Luis Obispo ag inspectors have discovered two GWSS egg masses, like the one at left, among nursery shipments this month.

Moore named new Kern County ag commissioner

David J. Moore, a 29-year veteran of Kern County's Department of Agriculture, has been named Director of Agriculture and Measurement Standards.

Moore replaces retiring director Ted Davis.



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Monterey County deputy agricultural commissioner Patty Murray reported one egg mass find last week from among a large number of shipments. "The plants were returned the same day to the shipper," Murray said. "We got excellent cooperation from both receiver and shipper."

In San Luis Obispo, deputy agricultural commissioner Marty Settevendemie said inspectors have made three GWSS finds on nursery shipments since Jan. 1. All were viable egg masses. They were immediately returned to Southern California, where they originated.

"Our goal is to keep the pest out of San Luis Obispo County," Settevendemie said. "We're not going to relax."

None of the nurseries involved in the recent GWSS finds is participating in CDFA's Nursery Treatment Pilot Project.

Under the pilot project, participating nurseries can allow up to 10 GWSS egg masses to remain on a shipment, according to CDFA spokesperson Jay Van Rein. Each egg mass is sleeved with a fine mesh material so that no emerging GWSS can escape, and the shipment is treated with either Tame or Carbaryl.

"The purpose is to check the efficacy of these two chemicals in killing emerging nymphs under real-world conditions," Van Rein said.

—Catherine Merlo

PD/GWSS Board seeks research director

California's Pierce's Disease/Glassy-Winged Sharpshooter (PD/GWSS) Board, which has funded over 120 research projects relating to PD/GWSS, is searching for a research director to manage the board's active projects as well as its ongoing search for new research avenues and opportunities.

"We're looking for a dynamic person who not only has the expertise to manage all the different research projects, but also is aware of the scope of other research taking place around the world that might be relevant to what we need here in our fight against PD/GWSS," said Steve McIntyre, chairman of the research subcommittee for the PD/GWSS Board and a wine-grape grower in Monterey.



The new research director will monitor and help facilitate the board's high level of research activity and ensure that maximum benefit is being derived from the research dollars invested while avoiding any duplication of research efforts.

"Our goal is to bring in someone who can foster an environment where collaboration between researchers accelerates discovery," said McIntyre.

Those interested in applying for the position can find more information on the California State Contracts Register Web site at <http://www.cscr.dgs.ca.gov/cscr>. The contact number is RFP #05-0616.

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Eric Wylde,
Santa Clara County
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Agriculture