

Sept. 10, 2004

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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Ventura County nurseries increase participation in GWSS treatment reimbursement program

Greater numbers of Ventura County plant nurseries are taking advantage this year of a one-time treatment reimbursement program to control glassy-winged sharpshooters (GWSS) in their operations.

"About a third of the county's 35 nurseries that are under the GWSS inspection program have stepped up for the application," says Alan Laird, deputy agricultural commissioner for Ventura County.

Last year, California's PD/GWSS Board made \$600,000 available to reimburse Ventura County nurseries for the one-time treatment. It's part of the comprehensive program the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) implemented two years ago in Ventura County to treat citrus groves for GWSS and to keep the pest from moving north into adjoining Kern County. However, it wasn't until this year that area nurseries began jumping on board with the program. That may be because Ventura County has made a few changes.

"This year, we hired a GWSS treatment coordinator, Tom Dullam, to contact people, sell the program and coordinate treatments," says Andy Calderwood, GWSS program coordinator with the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner's Office.

One large area nursery, Valley Crest Tree Co., received a treatment of Tristar, a wettable powder insecticide, in late August under the GWSS reimbursement program.

"At our nursery in Fillmore, we saw GWSS trap counts drop from 700 in early August to 12 after we applied the Tristar," says Robert Crudup, Valley Crest president and a member of the state's Pierce's Disease Advisory Task Force.

Other nurseries also are using Merit®, another GWSS treatment material.

The treatments are made by Ventura



County nurseries that ship plant materials to areas of California that are not infested with GWSS. Ventura County is considered GWSS-infested.

Reimbursement to nursery owners takes about 35 days.

Disappointing participation. Although another four to five nurseries are expected to join the list of those treating for the sharpshooter, Calderwood says reluctance by several area nurseries and citrus growers to participate in the reimbursable GWSS treatment programs has surprised and disappointed his office. Concerns about the impact of GWSS treatment materials on beneficial insects have kept some growers from participating.

"However, the impact on beneficials is minor, especially with Admire®," Calderwood says.

Admire is a systemic insecticide used to treat GWSS. It has a long-acting residual effect that suppresses sharpshooters for six months or more.

Ventura County is making efforts to boost participation in the reimbursement treatment programs for nurseries and citrus. "We are organizing a program to address concerns and assure that treatment won't

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Trees at a Southern California nursery receive a GWSS treatment prior to shipping. (Photo: Nursery Growers Association)

"At our nursery in Fillmore, we saw GWSS trap counts drop from 700 in early August to 12 after we flew on the Tristar."

Robert Crudup, Valley Crest Tree Co. and member of the Pierce's Disease Advisory Task Force



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interfere with Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programs,” says Calderwood.

Ventura County is home to several organic citrus growers, who avoid most chemicals. But Calderwood points out that organic producers can use an approved material, Pyganic®, to treat citrus for GWSS, although it is not as efficacious as Admire or Merit.

Another reason more citrus growers have not participated in the county’s treatment program is because they have not been willing or able to modify their irrigation systems for Admire, which is delivered to trees through a drip irrigation system.

Treating citrus. So far this year, Ventura County has treated about 10,000 acres of citrus for GWSS, using funds from the \$2 million USDA program. Under it, citrus growers can be reimbursed for their costs to treat the sharpshooter. Since March, roughly equal amounts of Admire and Assail®, another GWSS treatment material, have been used to treat area citrus groves.

“In our best area, we expect to receive about 80 percent participation of total citrus acreage,” Calderwood says. “We’re only seeing about 50-percent participation in the worst areas.”

Near Somis, an area with a large amount of lemon acreage, more than 90 percent of the area’s total acreage is expected to participate in the treatment program.

Laird and his team were puzzled when Valencia orange groves in Ventura County’s River Valley that recently had been treated with Admire showed higher GWSS populations than the previous year. University of California researchers studied the situation and recommended that more water be applied before and after treatment to boost Admire’s uptake into the trees.

Laird and Calderwood are especially concerned about GWSS this year, since populations have flared in Ventura County.

“We saw relatively low numbers of GWSS in 2003,” says Calderwood. “But we saw a large population boom this spring.



Every leaf must be turned upside down to look for evidence of GWSS eggs. Egg cases are the most difficult to find and are cause for immediate rejection of the load. (Photo: Nursery Growers Association)

We were seeing hundreds of GWSS per trap in late spring in hot spots across the county.”

Keeping rejections down. Despite the increased pest pressure, Ventura County has kept rejections of its nursery shipments to low levels. More than 1 million flats and containers are shipped from Ventura County every year, with an average of more than 100,000 per month. For August, that amounted to about 9,400 shipments from Ventura County, one of California’s top five nursery producers. Laird reports that county inspectors rejected only four shipments in July for the presence of GWSS, and just three in August. All findings were GWSS egg masses.

Statewide, rejections also remain low, says Greg Morris, a GWSS program supervisor with the California Department of Food and Agriculture. Nursery shipments from January through mid-August totaled 51,959, compared to 43,784 for the same period in 2003. GWSS rejections numbered 39 versus 33 at the same time last year.

“Between January and July 31, we’re up more than 8,000 nursery shipments statewide compared to the same time last year,” Morris says. “Among those, we had only six rejections, so percentage wise, we’re doing a little better.”

The GWSS nursery program includes inspections for the pest at shipment origin and destination, both conducted by county agricultural commissioner’s offices. In addition, nurseries must conduct their own GWSS inspections.

— Catherine Merlo

Kern-Tulare GWSS Task Force to meet Sept. 15

The Kern-Tulare Glassy-winged Sharpshooter Task Force will meet Wednesday, Sept. 15, 2004, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon at the Kern County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office in Bakersfield. On the meeting agenda:

- Tulare County GWSS Update - Area-wide Coordinators
- Kern County GWSS Update - Area-wide Coordinators
- Statewide Update – Roger Spencer, CDFA
- USDA Report – Lloyd Wendel, USDA
- Biocontrol Update – David Morgan, CDFA
- Bulk Grape and Citrus Movement Update – Kern/Tulare Counties
- Upcoming Meeting Announcements

The Kern County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office is located at 1001 South Mount Vernon Avenue in Bakersfield.

For more information, contact the Kern County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office in Bakersfield at (661) 868-6300 or the Tulare County office at (559) 685-3323.