

January 21, 2005

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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Winter weather brings good and bad to state's GWSS areas

The January storms that have brought record rains and flooding to several California counties, including Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo, have caused millions of dollars in damages to crops. But winter weather also has delivered at least one benefit when it comes to the glassy-winged sharpshooter (GWSS), at least in the San Joaquin Valley.

"The several days we've had of fog and daytime highs in the upper 40s increase the rate of GWSS mortality," says Dennis Haines, biologist with the Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner's Office.

Cold temperatures also have lingered in the normally warmer foothills that sit above the valley fog. These higher elevations are home to many citrus groves, a known winter host of GWSS.

Dr. Marshall Johnson, an entomologist with the University of California-Riverside who's stationed at the UC Kearney Agricultural Center in Parlier, agrees that GWSS mortality from cold temperatures is likely. He and his colleagues are studying spatial population dynamics and over-wintering biology of GWSS in the San Joaquin Valley.

"When temperatures drop to below 50 degrees Fahrenheit, GWSS can't feed," Johnson says. "If they go two to three days without feeding, they will dehydrate and possibly die."

In studying the long-term effects of cold weather exposure on the sharpshooter, Marshall and his team are documenting which temperature levels stop GWSS feeding. They're examining the frequency and duration of the sharpshooter's feeding behavior under varying environmental conditions.

"When we complete our research, we hope we can then predict where in the Central Valley GWSS will appear in the spring," Marshall says.



Results will help identify where continued GWSS management efforts should be directed.

Heavy rains also can be a major mortality factor for many insects, he adds. Rain can wash them off a plant or protective habitat, where they can be washed down a creek or become victim to a predator.

Ventura County hit hard. GWSS winter mortality rates may offer little consolation to growers in Ventura County, where crop damages from this month's rains are estimated at \$52 million, according to Alan Laird, the county's deputy agricultural commissioner.

"Strawberries were hit hardest," Laird says. "We're estimating \$20 million in damages so far."

Strawberry growers will lose out on one to two pickings as they halt normal operations to remove bruised and rotted fruit from fields.

Ventura County has received 17.5 inches of rain this month, compared to 1 inch in January 2004. "The first storm on Jan. 3 brought 4 inches," says Laird.

Flooding problems occurred when heavy rains caused the Santa Clara River, which runs west from Piru, to overflow its banks.

"At least five plant nurseries were affected by flooding and mud debris," Laird

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Flood waters run through a washed out lemon orchard in Ventura County Wednesday. The road in the foreground used to run straight across where the water now flows. (Photo: Warren Nichols, California Department of Food and Agriculture)



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says. "Thousands of container plants were lost to the river."

While some citrus orchards were washed out by flooding, others have been luckier. "The rains delay harvesting but provide the benefits of deep watering, which also helps clean up the root system," adds Laird.

Rains and flooding have halted GWSS trapping operations in Ventura County.

"We're basically shut down until the roads and mud dry up," says Craig Hanes, who oversees Ventura County's GWSS Pilot Project for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). "We're just starting to assess our trapping areas. We know we've lost some traps that were washed away by flooding."

Hanes noted that many roads have

been damaged throughout Ventura County, home to many agricultural operations. That's made many trapping sites inaccessible.

"Only one lane of Highway 33 was open as of Wednesday," says Hanes. "That's the only road into or out of the Ojai Valley."

In Kern County's General Beale Pilot Project, very little damage was done to GWSS traps by the rains and winds from January's storms.

"We're back up to 100 percent on our traps there," says CDFA's David Elms.

In the Highway 65 area north of Seventh Standard Road and in several Tulare County spots where soils are heavier, muddy roads have prevented crews from returning to GWSS trap sites.

—by Catherine Merlo

Lodi winegrape grower Brad Lange heads PD/GWSS Board's new slate of officers

Brad Lange, a Lodi-area winegrape grower, has been selected to chair the 15-member grower board charged with overseeing statewide research and control efforts related to Pierce's Disease (PD) and the glassy-winged sharpshooter (GWSS).

California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary A.G. Kawamura confirmed the board's recent election of Lange and fellow officers Vice Chair Pete Downs of Kendall Jackson Wine Estates in Sonoma and Treasurer Jim Unti of Canandaigua Wine Company in Madera.



PD/GWSS BOARD

Lange, formerly the board's vice chair, replaces Bob Steinhauer of Beringer Blass Wine Estates in St. Helena.

The PD/GWSS Board is made up of growers and processors from California's major winegrape growing regions. It's responsible for making program and research funding recommendations to CDFA.

PD has no known cure, and left unchecked, it could be devastating to the grape industry and several other California crops.

New video chronicles statewide efforts to control PD, GWSS

A new video chronicling the innovative and ongoing efforts to address the devastating effects of Pierce's Disease and its prime vector, the glassy-winged sharpshooter (GWSS), is now available.

Produced by the PD/GWSS Board and the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the 12-minute video examines the unique collaboration between winegrape growers, industry and govern-

ment to control the spread of GWSS, while simultaneously investing in research aimed at finding a cure.

Available in VHS, DVD and CD-ROM format, free copies of the video are available by writing to Brown-Miller Communication at 1114 Jones St., Martinez CA 94553, or emailing them at bmc@brownmillerpr.com. Please specify preferred format.

"We know we've lost some traps that were washed away by flooding."

— Craig Hanes, CDFA-GWSS Pilot Project for Ventura County

PD Board, Task Force to meet Jan. 24

A joint meeting of the CDFA Pierce's Disease Control Program PD/GWSS Board and the Pierce's Disease Advisory Task Force will be held Monday, Jan. 24 from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at CDFA's office at 1220 N Street, Room A-477 in Sacramento.