

July 16, 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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Tulare County waits to see effects of summer GWSS treatments

Tulare County agricultural officials will have to wait until fall to see how effective their summer Admire® treatments in citrus groves have been in reducing populations of the glassy-winged sharpshooter (GWSS).

"It will take a while for the Admire to be taken up into the trees at lethal doses to GWSS," says Dennis Haines, agricultural biologist with the Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner's Office.

Admire is the brand name of a systemic insecticide that is absorbed through the plant's root system. It is known by the generic name, imidacloprid, and belongs to a class of chemicals known as neonicotinoids.

As participants in the GWSS Area-wide Management Program, Tulare officials are hoping to slow the spread of GWSS with further reductions of the sharpshooter. The pest reappeared this spring in what Haines calls "fairly significant" numbers of one to two counts per trap across the county's GWSS infested area. The county also saw some "hot spots" in commercial citrus on the north side of Porterville and scattered other areas "where we expected to see GWSS flare-ups," Haines says.

Tulare County's GWSS infestation covers an area just east of Highway 65 from Lindsay south along the foothills to the Kern County border. The infested area is home mostly to commercial citrus groves.

The summer treatments targeted GWSS adults and any emerging nymphs that survived treatments made last fall.

Now that the summer Admire treatments are being finished, Haines says Tulare County will continue its GWSS control program on a case-by-case basis, with foliar treatments of the insecticide, Assail®. He said GWSS program officials with the U.S. Department of Agriculture will make those treatment decisions with the area

treatment coordinator, Pest Management Associates.

Slowing the spread of GWSS. In the last two years, Tulare County has managed to keep GWSS from spreading north. "But we haven't gotten rid of it," Haines says.

Last fall, the county treated 39,000 acres of citrus with Assail. GWSS counts dropped but by May 2004 had risen again to regular counts of one or two pests per trap per week. Citrus growers were reimbursed with government funds for treating their groves for GWSS last fall.

"Still, we don't want to be treating that large of an area every year," says Haines. "We hope our spring and summer treatments will further reduce GWSS populations so that we can focus on hot spots instead of all citrus."

Haines said that GWSS counts have remained very low in urban areas in Porterville that had been treated with Merit® in 2003.

Recent GWSS finds in Richgrove mean Tulare County officials will have to coordinate efforts to treat sites in the city as well as surrounding citrus groves and vineyards. Meetings are planned for next week to discuss coordinating both urban and commercial treatment strategies. Typically, urban treatments are applied by soil injection with Merit. A public meeting will be held in Richgrove prior to any treatment to provide information to affected urban residents.

"The urban population here is very supportive," Haines says.

Tulare County also has used biocontrol tactics against GWSS. By releasing thousands of parasitic wasps, which are natural enemies of the sharpshooter, program officials hope to reduce GWSS egg masses deposited in spring and summer, thus curtailing the pest's over-wintering population.

(continued on page 2)

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(continued from page 1)

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Gearing up for harvest. Table grape harvesting has begun in Tulare County, Haines said. He expects the area’s wine-grape harvest to kick off in early August. Tulare County employs a bulk grape movement program similar to Kern County’s, where shipments are inspected to ensure that no live GWSS are transported from vineyards.

Tulare County’s infested area is not home to many vineyards or much plant

nursery production, Haines says. Still, monitoring for GWSS takes place at plant nurseries as a precautionary measure.

Tulare County’s citrus harvest continues with Valencia oranges. The Navel orange harvest will begin in the fall, and bulk citrus inspections for GWSS are conducted on a year-round basis. The county is home to numerous packinghouses that clean, ship, and market the fruit for customers from as far away as Ventura County.

“Our citrus growers have shipped bulk loads with very few problems since 2003,” says Haines.

— *Catherine Merlo*

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