

GCGA Announces "Round 2" Psyllid Control Effort



Based on the very positive success of the 2008-2009 cooperative dormant spray efforts promoted by the Gulf Citrus Growers Association's Production and Research Committee, GCGA is preparing to launch "round 2" of this Asian Citrus Psyllid control program. This season, the GCGA Psyllid Suppression "Team," including scientists from the UF/IFAS' Southwest Florida Research and Education Center, the region's multi-county extension citrus agent, the FDACS'/DPI area staff and citrus grower leaders, plans to coordinate two dormant sprays. The "first" spray will be initiated in the November-December period, and the other in the January-February time frame. The program is voluntary and is being coordinated through the association, area team "captains" and the applicators.

These recommendations are based on the "Team's" consensus, that last season's initiative was very effective. Follow-up surveys conducted by UF/IFAS and FDACS'/DPI personnel showed that over 80,000 acres of citrus were sprayed during the dormant period (December-February) by aerial application with additional acreage covered by ground. The surveys also documented major reductions of psyllid populations in the groves that initiated the cooperative dormant spray program. "Comparing the November and February samples, the initial effect of the aerial sprays reduced the psyllid populations by 60%," noted Dr. Phil Stansly, UF/IFAS entomologist. "However, populations more than doubled during this time in the untreated blocks that could be identified," he added.

The Asian citrus psyllid (*Diaphorina citri*) vectors the bacteria *Cd. Liberibacter*

asiaticus causing the citrus greening disease of Huanglongbing (HLB).

"Reducing psyllids in citrus groves slows the incidence of greening," said Ron Hamel, GCGA executive vice president. "The association's leadership initiated this cooperative, coordinated effort in the 'Gulf' region since the science conducted to date suggests that it is one of the best

to suppress the pest is the 'dormant spray,' a foliar application of insecticide directed against the 'overwintering' adults. This spray attacks the pest at its weakest point, when beneficial insects like ladybeetles and lacewings are generally absent from the groves as well. The larger the treated area of citrus, the greater the effectiveness of the dormant sprays," Stansly explains.

Dr. Fred Gmitter, professor of citrus breeding and genetics at UF/IFAS' Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred, reported to GCGA members that his reconnaissance in citrus groves in China, also points to the effectiveness of strategically timed spraying for psyllid control. He suggests spraying before trees are flushing new growth and before budding occurs.

Additional information and details regarding the cooperative dormant spray program can be provided through:

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GCGA "Team" Members Plan Strategy

(L to R) Mark Colbert, Dr. Phil Stansly, Dr. Mongi Zekri and Rusty Noah review details of the proposed 2009-2010 "Gulf Citrus" cooperative dormant psyllid spray program for the region.

management tools that growers can use today...to deal with this dreaded disease."

Dr. Stansly, UF/IFAS entomologist, explained the strategy behind the coordinated dormant sprays for psyllid control. "During late fall and early winter, weather in Florida is generally dry and cool, causing citrus trees to cease producing new foliage that psyllids depend upon to lay eggs and reproduce. Adults must then 'overwinter' by feeding on mature leaves until the spring flush...which is generally in mid to late February. An effective tool

"There has been excellent 'buy in' by citrus growers in our region for this voluntary program," added Mark Colbert, chairman of GCGA's Production and Research Committee. "We stand ready to do all we can to initiate another successful cooperative and coordinated dormant spray program again this season. And, we invite the growers who did not participate in last season's successful initiative...to join with us this season. The greater the participation...the greater the results. This benefits all citrus growers in our region," said Colbert.