

Growers of deciduous fruit crops may be familiar with “chilling hours” where timing of flowering and fruit set can be predicted once a set number of chilling hours below a certain threshold temperature has accumulated. The same idea can be used for predicting if fruit flies can survive the winter and when they are likely to infest crops.

The main difference between “chilling hours” for fruit set and “degree-days” for fruit fly activity is that the degree-days measure the number of days above a certain threshold temperature.

Adult female QFF that have survived the winter need about 15 days to be able to find a mate, mate and lay eggs, with the preferred time of the day to mate toward sunset.

It is important to keep an eye on sunset temperatures as in the case temperatures reach 15°C it is possible QFF hiding in refuges nearby will mate and, two or three days later, will lay eggs if there are any suitable fruit around.

At this time ensure that fruit is protected (e.g. baits for commercial growers or netting for home gardeners) or removed.

The 2018-19 QFF population, in the Goulburn Murray Valley was significant in that it was the lowest it has been since the beginning of the QFF Area wide Management (AWM) project.

While weather played a part in this decrease it was not the sole factor. The AWM project has played a crucial role by instilling a sense of ‘ownership of issue’ and galvanising the community, growers and government organisations through an intensive awareness, education and engagement strategy.

This has resulted in the removal of over 5000 unmanaged host trees and plants to date, reduced numbers of QFF in the region and increased horticultural production and exports.

The approach of Spring will see flies start to move out of their warm, winter refuges into parks, gardens and orchards looking for food and places to mate and lay eggs. Adults that have overwintered will start to die, however they will mate and lay eggs into fruit before they die.



Victoria's Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes and GMV Regional Fruit Fly Co-ordinator Ross Abberfield.

September is the time to:

- Place monitoring traps out
- Check traps at least once a week
- Check for the presence of young and ripening fruit
- Check fruit for sting marks and/or associated rot development
- If QFF are present net fruit and/or bait crops with fruit fly baits
- Pick and destroy all infested fruit properly

These steps are the best strategy to reduce the impact of overwintering QFF on next season's crops.

Victoria's Minister for Agriculture **Jaclyn Symes** recently announced funding to extend the GMV Regional Fruit Fly Area Wide Management Project until 30 June, 2020.

The funding has been made available through the Managing Fruit Fly in Victoria Regional Grants Program, as part of the Victorian Government's investment in keeping our agricultural sector secure and preventing the spread of pests and diseases.

For more information about management of QFF in the Goulburn Murray Valley visit www.gmv-qldfruitfly.com.au



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