



Queensland Fruit Fly Newsletter February 2019



Welcome

2019 brings some changes with the delivery of the Queensland Fruit Fly management program in the Greater Sunraysia region. Mildura Rural City Council currently auspice the program and our services are available to residents in Victoria within Swan Hill, Mildura and Gannawarra Shires - as far south as Kerang.

This is intended to be interim until longer-term arrangements can be worked out. The current Victorian program remains grower driven with a new governance committee formed to help develop the way forward. The 14th February 2019 is the inaugural meeting with industry nominated representation from:

- Australian Table Grapes Association
- Swan Hill Summerfruits Association
- Sunraysia Citrus Growers & Citrus Australia
- Dried Fruits Australia
- Murray Valley Winegrowers
- Ausveg

The governance committee is also supported by local and state government including:

- Swan Hill Rural City Council; Mildura Rural City Council; Gannawarra Shire Council
- Agriculture Victoria and NSW DPI

This is the first grower newsletter under this arrangement with the purpose of providing an update on Queensland fruit fly specifically tailored to the Greater Sunraysia. We have also engaged the services of Andrew Jessup who has assisted us with some agronomic advice for the months ahead – see seasonal reminders below.

We welcome your feedback. Please send us an email and tell us what else you would like to see published in this newsletter info@greatersunraysiapfa.com.au.

Find more information at www.pestfreearea.com.au or follow us on facebook [@greatersunraysiapestfreearea](https://www.facebook.com/greatersunraysiapestfreearea) for weekly updates.

Regional Trends In Fly Numbers

A dry winter and heavy frosts in some areas are thought to have contributed to the relatively low number of Queensland fruit flies caught in the Government surveillance traps. Fly catches in Winter and early Spring were less than what was observed in the previous two years 2016 and 2017 (Figure 1).

However, in December 2018, the total fly numbers across the whole region rose to levels similar to those seen in 2017. This was followed by the highest peak in January observed in 2018.

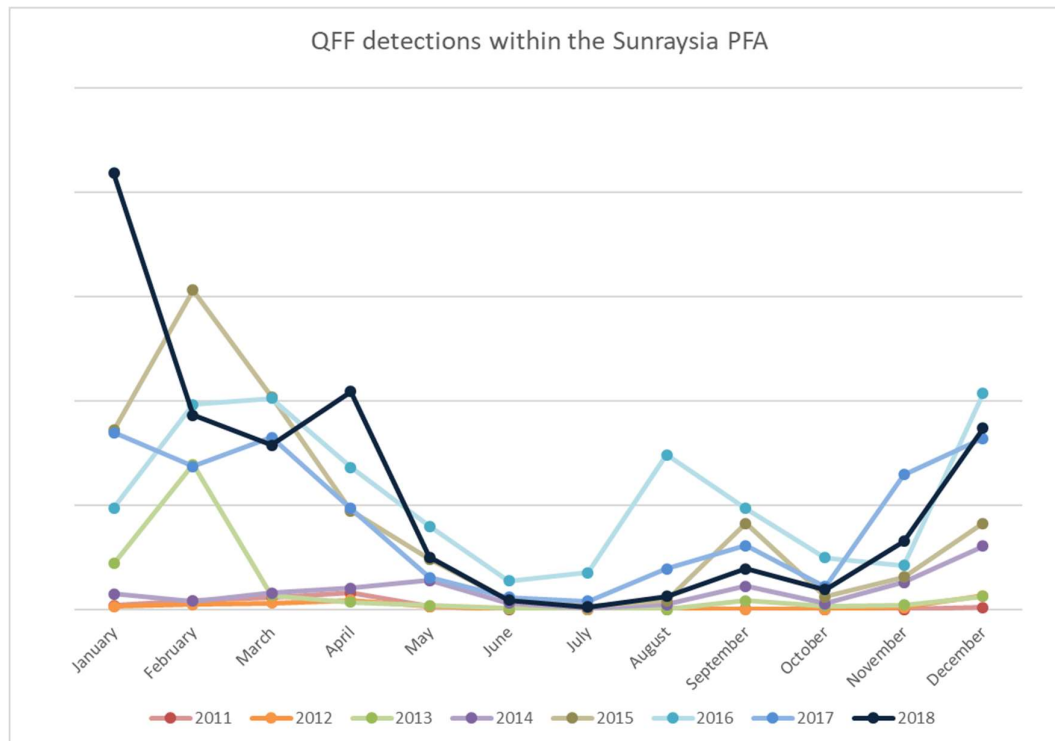


Figure 1 - Queensland Fruit Fly detection across the Greater Sunraysia PFA (NSW and Victoria). To note: Fly numbers caught in the surveillance traps are only a sample of the total fly population as the traps target male flies.

When looking at individual locations over a three-month period: October, November and December 2018, the sites with the highest average number of flies per trap were observed in the northern regions (visit the pfa website for [Figure 2](#)) for the following locations:

Northern Region (Boundary Bend to Pooncarie):

- NSW - Coomealla; Gol Gol north; Curlwaa; Morquong; Monak; and Trentham Cliffs.
- Victoria - Merbein; Cardross; Nangiloc; and Colignan.

The Southern Region (Narrung to Kerang) has comparatively lower levels than the northern locations with the highest records seen in Tooleybuc (NSW); Kerang; Narrung and Kenley (visit the pfa website for [Figure 3](#)).

When compared against the same period last season (October – December 2017) Coomealla, Merbein, Tol Tol and Colignan have seen the greatest increase in the average number of flies.

The following locations had fewer flies for October – December 2018 when compared with 2017. The most notable decrease was for Narrung. This is a promising start to the season and will hopefully translate into lower numbers as the season progresses.

- NSW - Monak; Curlwaa; Trentham Cliffs; and Ellerslie;
- Victoria – Koorlong; Mildura South; Stewart; Sunny Cliffs; Yelta; Iraak; Narrung; Kerang; Nyah and Nyah West; Kenley; and Swan Hill.

No flies were recorded from October to December 2018 in the following locations:

- NSW – Darling View; Jamesville; Paringi; Yatpool; Mallan and Pooncarie.

Victoria – Liparoo; Hattah; Lake Charm; Moulamein; Tresco West; Tyntynder South; Woorinen South; and Myall

Did you know you can receive fly catch data each week?

If you have a Property Identification Code (PIC) you will be sent the data for surveillance traps within 1.5km of your property. Apply **online** via Agriculture Victoria website: <https://pic.agriculture.vic.gov.au> or ring the PIC helpline on **1800 678 779**. This is a free service provided by Agriculture Victoria and is the same system used to provide notification for storms, fires and biosecurity emergencies.

Observations

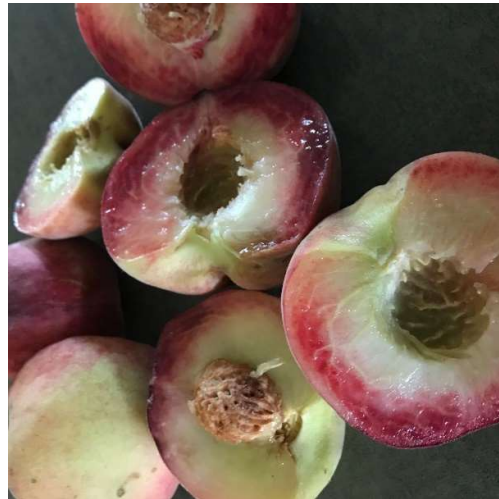
Andrew Jessup provides an explanation for the fly catch observations in Greater Sunraysia. A summary is provided below, or the full report can be accessed from our website

The most heartening aspect of the fly catch data is that the 2018 spring peak (September) was much lower than that of the previous year and well down on that for 2016. This peak is reflective of the number of flies that have survived winter. As the days warm-up they emerge from their shelter for food and water and then they are ready to mate. The reduced number of flies trapped in spring may be due, at least in part, to better awareness across the whole community and more effective control activities used such as tree removal, trapping, and baiting.

October is usually the month when the winter flies die and why we see a drop in the number of flies trapped at this time. But there are still plenty of eggs, larvae, and pupae around that create the problems in summer and autumn. The rise in trap numbers in November and December is the second generation of flies that have matured and are ready to mate. From 2016 to 2018, the early summer peak has decreased in traps located within urban areas and in the out-skirts of towns but has increased in rural areas.

In Greater Sunraysia, the fly numbers usually peak in January-February. However, January 2019 brought with it multiple days of **extreme heat** and low humidity! It is expected that many of the adult flies will not have survived these hot and dry conditions. Eggs and larvae too may be killed if the fruit they were in was exposed to full sun and reached 'boiling' temperatures. Pupae in the soil's surface may have also died given they are prone to desiccation.

BUT, this does not mean that all life stages have died during January's hot spell. Adults can survive the heat inside a cool, shady canopy. Home gardens and orchards with irrigation can actually be very good safe havens for fruit flies at this time of the year. Fruit in the shade of the tree canopy, or if it has fallen to the ground under the shade of the tree, may also support larvae to full maturity where pupae can burrow to cooler depths of the soil. In January the flies that survive the heat will emerge to become adults within about 10 days and will attack fruit in the late summer and autumn.



Seasonal reminders

According to the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website (accessed 8 February 2019) the weather outlooks for February to April 2019 show a 40-45% chance of higher than usual rain around Mildura (~25-50mm) through to Swan Hill and Kerang (~50-100mm). Average maximum temperatures are likely (65-75% chance) to be higher than normal (27-30°C) as are average minimum temperatures likely (60-65%) to be higher than normal (12-15°C).

The forecast cooler temperature (i.e. relative to the 40+ degrees experienced in January) and increase in humidity will increase the chances of survival of all life stages of Queensland Fruit Fly. From mid-spring, through summer and autumn, trap numbers will go up and down. This is due to the maturation of different generations and to weather patterns.

If the trends in the numbers of flies being trapped in February continue to climb the flies have the potential to cause serious damage if not monitored and controlled properly.

Seasonal reminders for commercial growers:

1. If you haven't already done so, set up a monitoring grid with male and female traps in and around your property including your house yard. Check these monitoring traps at least **once a week**. If you are catching flies, you will need to be ready to act.
 2. At the same time as checking your traps check any ripe or ripening fruit. Look for sting marks, bruising or abnormal softening. Cut the fruit open to see if there are eggs or larvae inside. Don't just look in your block, make sure you also check any fruit trees growing around your house, along the road verges, channel banks or along property boundaries for signs of infestation.
 3. If you have had problems previously it is advisable to ensure you have access to suitable quantities of fruit fly bait so that if (or when!) fruit flies are found, in fruit or in traps, you can commence your baiting program straight away (i.e. on the same day).
 4. Ensure your orders for fruit fly baits and, if necessary, fruit fly cover sprays, have been sent in to your supplier.
 5. Make sure your monitoring traps are still working. Traps put out in mid-November will need to be changed mid-February and every 3 months after. Ideally monitoring traps are pre-ordered each time the old ones are replaced so you can have monitoring traps that work all year round.
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Regional Round-up



Citrus packing company MFC - leading the way

Mildura Fruit Company is tackling Queensland Fruit Fly head-on by working closely with their growers to introduce weekly bait sprays on all Citrus properties.

In catching up with MFC grower service team in January, they commented that most growers have responded positively to this requirement and have gradually put in place the sprays over the last 18 months saying “Once growers understand the negative impacts that flies can have on their crops, implementing on farm measures and bait spraying leading up to harvest becomes an easy decision.” Some of the larger properties have put on contractors specifically to spray for fruit fly. MFC is working towards 100% adoption of bait sprays by all growers this year.



Commercial field trials

Organic Crop Protectants (OCP) are progressing with commercial field trials in 2019 using viscous protein emulsions SPLAT CL and ANAMED. Both are designed to last at least 20 days in the crop before they break down and carry an insecticide as a lure and kill strategy targeting male and female Queensland Fruit Fly. OCP are looking for organic and conventional growers who are interested in participating in these trials.

If this is you please contact Paul Wynn direct on 0431 269 108.



Lake Boga Sea Scouts providing a valuable service in their community

Within 48 hours of a resident notifying Swan Hill Rural City Council, the Sea Scouts have completed the job of cleaning-up fallen and rotting fruit!

So far the Sea Scouts have been called-out to five households across Swan Hill, Lake Boga and Nyah West. The participants have primarily been elderly residents who understand the importance of managing QFF but struggle physically to help. Many have also volunteered their fruit tree to be removed so they no longer have the worry.

At the same time as being helpful the Sea Scouts gain valuable points for their Landcare and Community service badges. This program is a Swan Hill Rural City Council initiative funded through the Agriculture Victoria Queensland Fruit Fly Community grants program.

Photo: Supplied by Teresa Lever



Table Grape Fruit Fly Workshops

The Australian Table Grape Association (ATGA), in conjunction with Alison MacGregor, Andrew Jessup and Hort Innovation, held the first mandatory Queensland fruit fly Area Wide Management workshops in December and January 2019. The importance of controlling fruit fly was evident within the industry with 238 growers attending the series of four workshops held in Mildura (140) and Robinvale (98).

ATGA's chief executive officer Jeff Scott reported that all growers must now incorporate pest monitoring for fruit fly in their fortnightly pest monitoring regime as a matter of course. The ATGA plans to develop a standard operation procedure and fact sheet to manage fruit fly on-farm that will become part of the documentation required for Accredited Table Grape Properties and support audit processes.

Find more information at www.pestfreearea.com.au or follow us on facebook [@greatersunraysiapestfreearea](https://www.facebook.com/greatersunraysiapestfreearea) for weekly updates or email us at info@greatersunraysiapfa.com.au.

