

season update

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QUEENSLAND – JANUARY 2006 REPORT

The past month has been very dry with many days of high temperatures. As a result, **red scale** populations are escalating, although generally the counts are still acceptable. Fruit counts of red scale are expected to continue increasing over the next month or so.

Microscope assessment of **aphytis parasitism** has commenced and range from as low as 3% up to 65%. The average levels are around 30%. At this time of year we would like to achieve parasitism rates of better than 50% while maintaining fruit infestation levels of less than 25%. Blocks that do not yet meet these levels should continue to receive additional releases of aphytis parasites.

Spined citrus bug continues to be an issue in lemons and imperials mainly. Pressure from this pest is greater than it has been for some years. Spined citrus bug can still be controlled by low strength endosulfan sprays. Spined citrus bug may be difficult to detect in the field as it is well camouflaged and also quite cryptic. Watch closely for any unexplained fruit drop.

Pest mite populations have remained generally low with only a few blocks throughout the district requiring treatment. The ongoing hot, dry weather is believed to be suppressing predatory mite populations. However **predatory mites** are present in most blocks even at low levels and improved conditions should see their numbers increase readily.

Navel oranges have suffered **fruit drop** in blocks that have been allowed to dry out. Growers are reminded to be especially careful to ensure that navel oranges do not become stressed during hot dry conditions. With other varieties it is important also to maintain soil moisture levels to ensure optimum fruit size. **Water demand** has been extremely high during the past month.

Thinning is required in many blocks and the first thinning should already have been completed by now. Trees will stress if high crop loads are not reduced by the end of January. Imperials appear to have a fair to average crop at this stage.

Most **potassium** applications should have been completed by now. Where a split application is being made the second treatment should be applied now if not already done.

Source: Dan Papacek, Bugs for Bugs