

season update

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QUEENSLAND – JULY 2006 REPORT

The **harvest** of mid season varieties has almost finished, with some growers now beginning to pick Murcott mandarins. Overall fruit quality has been good, while prices for mid season fruit have been reasonable and are selling well at the moment. There has been a continuous harvest of fruit this season with very little or no interruption from rain.

The availability of **water** is still a very serious issue throughout the Burnett district, due to a severe lack of rain and low river levels. The lack of fresh water in the river system is also leading to high salt levels.

There have been some reports of **fruit fly** activity. Growers need to be aware that fruit fly can be a serious issue as the weather warms and if rain occurs. Ripe murcotts and any harvested blocks with left over fruit are very susceptible. Removal of all fruit from a harvested block is recommended.

Pruning should be conducted soon after harvest and this may help with the removal of old fruit. It is recommended that as much dead wood as possible be removed while pruning to help with the management of diseases such as **black spot**. If growers mechanically prune (or hedge) they should ensure that cut material is removed from the trees afterwards.

Emperor Brown Spot (EBS) is showing up, although overall levels have been low due to dry conditions and a low incidence of fogs. If rain is forecast, growers should consider applying a protectant fungicide to susceptible varieties.

Red scale has cleaned up well even on blocks that had high levels earlier in the season. There has been some activity from **borers** in lemons on the more coastal orchards.

Thrips continue to be a problem in the young fruit of out of season lemon crops, and are becoming more difficult to control. Thrips species tend to be quick at building up a resistance to chemicals, and growers are urged to limit the amount of unnecessary pesticide applications on their orchards.

There has been a high level of **creasing** in many of the mid season blocks (Taylor Lee, Hickson and Nova). Some murcotts have also been significantly affected by creasing this season. Maintaining sufficient calcium levels is thought to help reduce the incidence of creasing. Growers may also consider the use of **gibberellic acid (GA)** on problem blocks, however this can slow the maturation process.

Integrated pest management (IPM) reports from the season are currently being compiled onto database. Most growers have already been approached for their spray records for the season. To help with trace back, information is stored onto database in end of season reports. Growers are reminded of the importance of maintaining accurate **spray records**.

The Queensland Citrus Improvement Scheme (QCIS) is now being carried out by Bugs For Bugs. The seed for the majority of **rootstock** varieties has now been extracted and are available for sale. Germination tests indicate the quality is excellent and despatching of the seed is under way.

Dan Papacek of Bugs For Bugs leaves for the US in July. He has been asked to talk at the California Conference for Biological Control. While there he will visit researchers and citrus orchards.

Source: Dan Papacek, Bugs for Bugs