

WINDOW ON AGRICULTURE

Office of the Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner

John Westoby
Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer

2604 Ventura Ave, Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Phone (707) 527-2371

December, 1999

Marilyn Vernon, Editor

PESTICIDE PERMIT AND IDENTIFICATION NUMBER RENEWAL

Growers are reminded to make an appointment to renew their pesticide permit or identification number. All grower identification numbers expire at the end of the year. Permit holders whose last names begin with R-Z, also expire at the end of the year.

Permit or identification numbers must be renewed before any spraying can be done in the new year. Growers who want to spray in January should call our office now. December appointment times as well as early January are currently being filled.

Growers with a private applicators certificate that expired this year will need six hours of continuing education. Two of the six hours need to be in Laws and Regulations. Growers who have attended the required class hours are asked to bring their continuing education information with them. Forms for continuing education tracking are available from our office.

Growers who do not have the required hours will need to take the private applicator certification exam. The study book, *Pesticide Safety - A Reference Manual for Growers* is available from University of California Cooperative Extension in both English and Spanish.

CONTINUING EDUCATION SEMINAR

On Thursday, December 2, the Agricultural Commissioner's Office sponsored its third annual continuing education seminar at the Santa Rosa Vets Building. The two hour class helps growers, pest control operators and advisors meet their continuing education requirements.

Speakers for the class were staff members of the Agricultural Commissioner's Office. Deputy Ag. Commissioner Stefan Parnay spoke on the Agricultural Urban Interface; Biologists Dan Curtin, Sue Opbroek, and Bruce McArthur spoke on gopher control, proper use of respirators, and worker protection standards respectively.

The Agricultural Commissioner's Office was pleased so many growers attended the seminar. We would like thank all who took the time to fill out the evaluation forms. The Staff has reviewed all the comments, and will use them in planning our presentation for next year. With 225 growers in attendance, many different views were expressed. Some growers enjoyed a certain talk while others liked that speaker the least. Hopefully, everyone came away with some new knowledge or had an idea reinforced.

HOLIDAY EXCLUSION

Biologists have been busy inspecting fruits, vegetables, and live plants at FedEx, UPS, and

HOLIDAY EXCLUSION (con't)

the Post Office. Plant shipments are held by shipping terminal employees for inspection by our office. Thousands of packages have already been inspected this holiday season.

The major insect problem this year is once again the Balsam Fir Gall Midge, a B-rated insect, which is coming in on wreaths from Maine, Vermont, and New York. The Commissioners from the Northern and Coastal counties have decided to return all infested wreaths to the out-of-state shippers. Several hundred wreaths have been returned this year.

The Balsam Fir Gall Midge forms a gall on the needle, which causes the needle to fall off. By the time the wreaths make it to California, large numbers of needles have fallen off. The commissioners in our area are concerned that this insect could infest our native firs, causing severe damage.

Biologist Susan Bryant continues to find A-rated white flies coming in on Hawaiian flowers. The two main white-flies are crouton whitefly and spiraling whitefly. On a recent shipment of pecans in the shell, Susan also found *Curculio caryae* commonly known as pecan weevil.

Biologists have continued to find quackgrass, a B-rated weed, in balled and burlaped shipments coming in from Oregon. Several different shippers have sent infested shipments. Infested material will be returned to shipper or bare-rooted and the soil destroyed.

GLASSY-WINGED SHARPSHOOTER

The Glassy-Winged Sharpshooter (GWSS), *Homeladisca coagulata*, has been spreading in the southern part of California, and is now established in Kern County. The GWSS is a pest in its own right. The major threat posed by the sharpshooter is its efficiency as a vector of *Xylella fastidiosa*. *Xylella fastidiosa* is a plant pathogenic bacterium which causes Pierce's Disease in grapevines, almond leaf scorch and oleander leaf scorch.

The sharpshooter has become established in Kern County in the grape production area around Temecula and has resulted in the devastation of many grapevines due to Pierce's disease.

Glassy-Winged Sharpshooters are about 12 mm in length (1/2 inch). Their general color is brown to black. Head, pronotum, and scutellum are brown or black with numerous ivory or yellowish spots. Wings are partly transparent with red or purple blotchy markings.

Sonoma County detection trappers checked their traps for GWSS, but none were found. Growers should look for this insect when monitoring their yellow-sticky traps for blue-green sharpshooters.

Growers can obtain color photos of the Glassy-Winged Sharpshooter from the Agricultural Commissioner's Office. Growers can also visit the California Department of Agriculture website at <http://www.cdafa.ca.gov/>

VINEYARD ORDINANCE

Vineyard Coordinator Gail Davis has been busy giving talks about the ordinance and reviewing the plans that have come into the Agricultural Commissioner's Office.

Talks were given in several parts of the county by Commissioner John Westoby, Assistant Commissioner Mike Smith and Gail Davis. A session was held after our continuing education seminar on December 2. One hundred and thirty growers attended this session.

Vineyard Coordinator Davis has compiled a hand-out titled, Understanding The Vineyard Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance . Copies of the hand-out are available from the Agricultural Commissioner's Office.

Agricultural Commissioner's staff reviewed 65 Level I vineyard applications. Five hundred "grandfathered" planting forms were also received. Gail Davis is reviewing all the paperwork that has been received.

The ordinance continues to change. For the most current information, call Gail Davis at 565-2371.

PLASTIC CONTAINER RECYCLE

On November 22 and 23, our office held plastic container recycling events in Sonoma and Healdsburg. The event was sponsored by our office in conjunction with Ag Plastics Recycle from Shafter, California and the Sonoma County Public Works Department.

The event started in 1994 and is now an annual event. In the past few years, there has been both a spring and fall collection day. Forty growers participated in the November collection.

A spring collection will be held in April. Growers are encouraged to save their herbicide and fungicide containers and bring them to this FREE event. Containers need to be triple-rinsed with lids and labels removed. Holes should be punched in the containers.

Biologists Dan Curtin, and Marilyn Vernon with the help from Program Assistants Bonnie Sallee and Peter Albers, worked at the events. For more information, please call Marilyn Vernon at 565-2371.

THE YEAR THAT WAS 1999

It was a year like most, unique in its own way. It was one of the coolest growing seasons we have experienced in quite some time. In fact, we had to go back to 1967 to find maturity dates for apples that were as late as this year. Of course, there was no flood this year, which was a definite plus. Wine grapes were late, but were favored by Indian Summer, and most fully ripened and were harvested in excellent condition. Many other commodities took longer to reach their peak, but all in all it was an adequate growing year.

Our office experienced a difficult year. Many of us are new to our positions, and we were directed to tackle a number of new projects; including the vineyard development ordinance, the right to farm ordinance, and high risk pest exclusion. We ve added a number of new employees and are happy to have them, but we are busting at the seams and are hoping to find a new location that can more appropriately accommodate us and allow us to continue to serve you well. Many concerns have been

THE YEAR THAT WAS 1999(con't)

expressed during the year about agriculture by certain segments of our populace. There has been an accelerated planting of vineyards because of the health of the wine grape industry and because of the pending ordinance. It is too early to predict how many acres of grapes will be planted, but as always it will be controlled by the marketplace. We do know that the agricultural industry is hearing the concerns that are being expressed. It is already examining itself to see what actions it can take to be better neighbors and players in Sonoma County's economy.

We hope that you and yours have a wonderful holiday season, and we will see you in the Y2K. We believe it is fact that our county will continue to be a wonderful county to live in as long as there is successful agriculture. To that end, we wish you continued well being into the new millennium.

