

WINDOW ON AGRICULTURE

Office of the Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner

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Marilyn Vernon and Suzanne Ostrom

DPR Releases 2003 Pesticide Illness Information

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation's (DPR) statewide summary of pesticide illnesses revealed a decline from 2002 to 2003. Some 1,232 cases were investigated in 2003, with pesticide exposure suspected or confirmed in 802 cases. In 2002, there were 1,859 investigations, with 1,316 suspected or confirmed.

Of the 802 suspected or confirmed illnesses statewide in 2003, 405 (50.5 percent) involved the use of agricultural pesticides, and 397 (49.5 percent) involved non-agricultural pesticide exposure. Occupational exposures accounted for 553 (69 percent) of the 802 cases.

In Sonoma County, there were 42 reported pesticide illnesses. Of those reported, 13 were found to be unrelated to pesticide use and one was undetermined. The remainder of the illnesses were categorized as definitely, probably or possibly resulting from a pesticide exposure, or asymptomatic (exposure occurred but no illness resulted). Of these reported, five were related to agriculture and 23 were non-agricultural.

For more information see DPR's website at: www.cdpr.ca.gov

Winegrape Growers to Vote on Continuing PD Assessment (From the GWSS Update Newsletter)

California's winegrape growers will vote this spring to continue the Pierce's Disease (PD) assessment, utilizing funds aimed at addressing the threat posed by PD and the Glassy-Winged Sharpshooter (GWSS). The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) will send out ballots during the week of May 16. CDFA said ballots would be sent to eligible winegrape growers who paid the 2004 harvest assessment. Once the ballots are sent out, they must be returned within 30 days to be counted. Additionally, 40 percent of eligible growers need to cast ballots to validate the referendum.

Following the devastating 1999 outbreak of GWSS in Temecula the wine industry quickly mobilized in support of a self-assessment to halt the spread and fund PD research. "To date the current assessment has raised nearly \$14 million," said Bob Wynn, CDFA's statewide coordinator for the Pierce's Disease Control Program. "More importantly, by assessing themselves, growers demonstrated their concern to government officials about the PD/GWSS threat, and we've been able to leverage those funds tenfold with state and federal grants to help contain PD/GWSS," Wynn added.

Winegrape Growers to Vote on Continuing PD Assessment (Cont.)

The PD/GWSS Board is made up of winegrape growers and grower/vintners from around the state. They advise the CDFA secretary on expenditure of assessment funds to ensure that the research is responsive to the needs of the grower community. More than 100 research projects are already being funded, providing the science needed to effectively control the pest, while also building a research foundation to better understand and address PD.

For more information about the referendum, log on to www.cdca.ca.gov/mkt/mkt/winery.html



GWSS



Pierce Disease

Pest Management Update

Pete Albers from the Agricultural Commissioner's Office, and Judy James from the Santa Rosa Junior College (S.R.J.C.) Agricultural Department were co-instructors for the spring semester "Pest Management Update" class at S.R.J.C. The class was held on Friday, February 25, and Saturday, February 26. Thirty pest control advisors, qualified applicators and private applicators attended the class. The class fulfilled ten hours of continuing education for pest control licensees.

Sue Ostrom, Senior Agricultural Biologist for the Agricultural Commissioner Office, spoke on changes in pesticide laws and regulations. Other speakers made presentations on the following topics: control of yellow jackets, gophers and moles, composting and its uses, olive fruit fly update, practical ecology for gardeners and vineyard owners, and principles of organic gardening.

The fall semester "Pest Management Update" will be held in late October. Interested parties should contact S.R.J.C. to sign-up for the class.

Promotion of Sue Ostrom

Sue Ostrom has been promoted to Senior Agricultural Biologist in the North district. Sue filled the position left vacant by Bruce McArthur, when he was promoted to district deputy.

Sue graduated from Sonoma State University with a degree in biology and a minor in chemistry. Sue started working for our department as a seasonal grape sugar tester. In December 1998, she was hired as a full-time biologist working in the high-hazard exclusion program. In addition to her work in exclusion and detection, Sue is the department's lead person in agricultural pesticide use enforcement.

The North district is comprised of Dan Curtin, Jim Raisner, Alex McVicker, Sue Ostrom, and Bruce McArthur.

Currently the Agricultural Commissioner's Office has begun the recruitment for a new biologist to fill the open position in the West district. We hope to fill that position in the next month.