

WINDOW ON AGRICULTURE

Office of the Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner

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Marilyn Vernon and Suzanne Ostrom

DPR Now Prescribes protection for endangered species

The Department of Pesticide Regulation has created a new online resource to help protect endangered species in California. It is the first interactive public database of its kind in the nation.

The free Web-based resource allows pesticide applicators and others to quickly and easily identify local habitat for endangered animals and plants. It will also advise applicators on precautions to take to protect endangered species. The system is called PRESCRIBE for "Pesticide Regulation Endangered Species Custom Real-time Internet Bulletin Engine."

PRESCRIBE replaces more than 2,500 pages of endangered species protection bulletins for 56 of the state's 58 counties. The paper bulletins are lengthy, difficult to read, and include every species at risk in a given county.

PRESCRIBE uses a sophisticated search engine to deliver custom data reports. A user begins by selecting the county desired, then the township, range, and section where a pesticide application is anticipated. PRESCRIBE identifies the listed species that may be present, down to a one-square-mile area.

In addition, PRESCRIBE can search through 30,000 pesticides by brand name, as opposed to paper bulletins that listed only the name of an active ingredient.

Once species and pesticides have been identified, PRESCRIBE lists protective measures for each species and pesticide combination. These measures were developed from biological studies of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and adapted to California uses. The custom instructions are brief enough to be attached to pesticide user permits, sales receipts, and work orders.



Tiger Salamander

Karnal Bunt Survey

Sonoma County will again be a participant in the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Karnal Bunt Survey (NKBS) in California, which begins with the wheat harvest.

Karnal Bunt Survey (cont.)

The NKBS requires sampling of all counties where susceptible host crops are produced, including wheat, durum wheat, and Triticale. California counties that produce a million or more bushels of wheat will be sampled at a rate of one sample per million bushels. Sonoma County will be among the few counties producing less than one million bushels of wheat that will be sampled. We will collect one four-pound wheat sample, which will be composite with other lower yield county samples in the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) laboratory in Sacramento. In addition, to the four-pound sample sent to the laboratory, we will collect a 250 gram sample and will retain this sample for identification purposes.

Sonoma County has been a participant in each NKBS since 1996, when Karnal Bunt was first found in Arizona as well as Riverside and Imperial Counties in California. Karnal Bunt is a smut fungus (*Tilletia indica* Mitra), and was originally discovered in 1931 near the city of Karnal, India.

Karnal Bunt produces black, thick walled powdery spores (teliospores), which replace part, if not all of the infected kernels, and is typical of the smut fungi. The teliospores may survive as long as five years in the soil and are airborne. Additionally, Teliospores can easily be disseminated during the harvesting process. However, if three percent of the grain is infected with Karnal Bunt the flour produced will have an off-flavor.

USDA and CDFA conduct the NKBS each year to assure wheat-importing countries that the wheat from California, and the United States is free from Karnal Bunt.



Farmers' Market Inspections

The certified farmers' markets in Sonoma County are currently being inspected to ensure that Certified Producer Certificate (CPC) holders grow the commodities being sold. The markets are certified through our department, and need to follow California's Agricultural Code and Code of Regulations. There are currently 12 certified markets in Sonoma County at the following locations: Cotati, Guerneville, Healdsburg, Monte Rio, Oakmont, Occidental, Petaluma, Santa Rosa downtown, Santa Rosa Veteran's building, Sebastopol, Sonoma Valley, and Windsor.

At farmers markets, each producer should have their CPC posted in a conspicuous area of their booth. Growers apply for a CPC from their home county Agricultural Commissioner's Office. The inspecting biologist will check several items at each booth to ensure those items are listed on their certificate.

Each producer's CPC should be current and embossed by the issuing commissioner's office. If a producer is selling for another producer, both names must be cross-referenced on each other's CPC. The commodities being sold by a producer must be listed on their CPC as well as being the producer's own production. Commodities are checked for quality and if they are harvested in the correct season for their growing area.

Producers selling nursery stock must have a nursery license issued by the California Department of Food and Agriculture or a fee exempt license issued by our department available at their booth.

Egg producers are checked for quality and labeling requirements.

Farmers' Market Inspections (cont.)

Those producers advertising their products as organic must have an organic registration or certification posted in their booth.

For those producers who sell their commodities on a price per pound basis, should have a current seal posted on the scale from our Weights and Measures Division.

Producers found not to be in compliance with California's direct marketing laws can be issued a notice of non-compliance. Repeat non-compliances could result in a fine levied against the producer and the suspension of the producer's CPC.



ANDREW SMITH, NEW AGRICULTURAL BIOLOGIST/STANDARDS STANDARDS SPECIALIST

We have recently recruited and interviewed many candidates for the vacant Agricultural Biologist/Standards Specialist I position left open as the result of John Westoby's retirement and subsequent promotions. We received a great response with many highly qualified candidates to interview and consider for the position. After thorough consideration of the candidates, the position was offered to

Andrew Smith who accepted the offer and started in his new position on June 7, 2005.

Andrew will be joining the west district team under district Deputy Agricultural Commissioner Joseph Gray.

Andrew has worked intermittently as an Agricultural Program Assistant for our office since May 2002 in program areas such as pest detection trapping, Exotic Newcastle disease, and Glassy Winged Sharp Shooter. Andrew also has experience working in the retail nursery business and a degree in Agro ecology. Andrew's other attributes include Spanish language skills and great enthusiasm.