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## Sonoma County Hunter-Trapper Jim ("O.B.") O'Brien has Retired

For the past 33 years O.B. has served the Sonoma County agriculture community well as the consummate conservationist during his career as Hunter-Trapper for the County's Agricultural Commissioner's Office. When most of us were still asleep O.B., accompanied by his dogs, was already on the road performing his appointed tasks. Although he has assisted residential areas with the control of various wildlife species such as skunks, raccoons, opossums, badgers, etc., his first concern was in the protection of agricultural interests from the larger predators, such as coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions, and on occasion black bears. While protecting sheep, goats, calves, colts, and other vulnerable livestock and the livelihood of farmers and ranchers, O.B. had a great respect for wildlife. O.B. could have been a crime scene investigator, using his talents to determine the what, where, when, and why of the events. He believed that he must be very target specific with his control measures.

With the increase of human population in Sonoma County over the years came many attitudinal and cultural changes which limited the tools available to the Hunter-Trapper. Trying to eliminate the predator was becoming more difficult, but O.B. adapted to an ever changing and more restrictive environment in which to work. He considered himself the luckiest man in the world to spend his life working as the Hunter-Trapper of Sonoma County.

He will be greatly missed by his colleagues and friends in the agricultural community. The stories that surround O.B. are legendary, not unlike those of the mountain men at the end of the 19th century.

We wish O.B. many happy years of retirement!

Cheers!



## Mealybugs at Harvest - Submitted by Dr. Lucia Varela

Grapes are nearly ready to harvest. Should you discover, at this time, a mealybug infestation in your vineyard, don't panic. First, identify which species is present. Grape and obscure mealybugs can be distinguished from vine mealybug: the tails are longer and the body more rectangular than in the vine mealybug. If there is any doubt, bring a sample to the University of California Cooperative Extension or to the Agricultural Commissioner's Office.

At this time of year, grape mealybugs are in their second (or summer) generation. In warmer areas such as Cloverdale females are already present. In cooler areas, the majority of the population is still in immature stages. Shortly however, females will begin appearing in these areas as well. In late summer and fall some females will oviposit in the fruit clusters but the majority of the females return to old wood to lay overwintering eggs. Obscure mealybugs have overlapping generations; thus all stages are present now. Both obscure and grape mealybug will be found on the trunk, cordons, spurs, basal portions of the shoots and on basal leaves and on clusters that touch older wood.

At the same time, all stages of overlapping generations of vine mealybug are found on canes, clusters, leaves, and petioles well above the fruit zone and under the bark on the trunk, cordons and spurs.

If ants are present in your vineyard, follow the ants to determine which insect they are tending. The amount of honeydew visible on a vine depends not only on the mealybug species but also on the number of ants tending the colonies. When ants are not present, honeydew produced by all mealybugs can give you sticky and shiny leaves and bunches, and wet trunks and cordons.

Keep records of infested fruit at harvest and map the infestations. Both grape and obscure mealybugs are best

controlled during the crawler stage. Mapping will help you target the areas to monitor in the coming year. A post-harvest application should never be used to control grape mealybug. Depending on the harvest date, the majority of the population is in the egg stage inside the ovisac under the bark. No chemical kills these eggs. Thus applying a treatment at this time will disrupt natural enemies and not control grape mealybugs.

An effective timing to reduce vine mealybug populations is immediately after harvest, before the nymphs begin to move to lower parts of the trunk. However, this treatment is effective if harvest occurs early, before mid-October.



## Apple Testing

Every year the Agricultural Commissioner's Office tests apples for maturity. Maturity testing is a way to make sure that only apples that will continue to mature to full ripeness will enter the marketplace. When a variety of apples has met the requirements for maturity the Commissioner's Office releases them for harvest and sale. Six varieties of apples are tested and released by the Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, they are: McIntosh, Jonathan, Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, Rome, and Granny Smith. Gravenstein apples are not released by the Commissioner's Office, but courtesy tests will be performed for growers that request them.

Each year members of our office will go into representative orchards and randomly select apples for testing. The apples are brought back to the lab in our office for maturity testing.



McIntosh, Jonathan, Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, and Rome apples are tested using a pressure test (how hard the apple is) and a sugar content test (how sweet the apple is). These two scores combine to determine maturity for these varieties. Each variety has specific scores that they must achieve to be considered mature.

Granny Smith apples are tested using a starch test. This test shows how much sugar the apple has.

Gravenstein apples are tested by checking the juice for sugar content.

## Glassy-winged Sharpshooter Egg Mass Found

Agricultural inspectors from the Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner's Office found one viable Glassy-winged Sharpshooter (GWSS) egg mass on August 1, 2007. The egg mass was found during a routine inspection of an incoming plant shipment from Riverside County.

The egg mass was sent to the California Department of Food and Agriculture entomology laboratory where it was identified on August 2, 2007, as a viable GWSS egg mass. The egg mass was found on the leaf of an escallonia plant (*Escallonia fradesii*), which is commonly used in landscaping. The 18 Escallonia plants in the shipment were returned to the origin shipper. The remaining plants in the shipment were released after a thorough inspection.

On average, our office annually inspects over 2,800 incoming regulated plant shipments. The spring and summer months are the busy season for the GWSS program. Shipments range in size from a few plants to thousands of plants.

The Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner's Office remains committed to preventing the introduction of this serious pest into Sonoma County. Local nurseries remain very cooperative in this effort as well. Everyday, we receive numerous calls for inspections from nurseries throughout the county, who have received plant material from GWSS infested areas. Their support and cooperation has been critical to the ongoing success of our program.

The local wine grape industry continues to fund educational posters, videos, and handouts, the website - [www.bugspot.org](http://www.bugspot.org), and the toll free number 1-866-BUGSPOT.

