

Control of Queensland fruit fly in New South Wales

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Queensland fruit fly is the most serious and widely distributed fruit fly along the eastern parts of Australia. It is commonly found in coastal NSW and in some parts west of the Great Dividing Range.

Fruit flies are a pest to orchardists and home gardens. They lay eggs below the surface of the fruit. Maggots or larvae hatch and burrow into the fruit, making it inedible. They are prevalent from December to April, although they may be active in other months of the year.

Fruit flies lay eggs in many fruits including tomatoes, stone fruit, citrus, apples and pears.

There are a number of things that can be done to protect fruit for the home gardener and for domestic and export markets.

Tree pruning

Keep trees well pruned. Do not allow trees to become too tall. Tall fruit-bearing trees are difficult to cover adequately with sprays and it is difficult to pick fruit. This fruit becomes increasingly susceptible to fruit fly attack and is then a source of fruit flies that attack other fruit crops. Keep trees pruned to about 2 m to 3 m.

Any fruiting trees, which are unwanted or regularly unharvested, should be cut down and removed.

Pick fruit

Pick fruit as it ripens. Store the fruit in the refrigerator, eat it immediately or give it to friends to be eaten immediately. Pick any unwanted fruit and place in a plastic bag with the top tied off.

Leave the bag in a sunny position for three days to allow the sun's heat to kill the fruit fly maggots and

adults. Dispose of the bag in the garbage system. Do not bury the bag in soil.

All fruit should be picked before it falls to the ground. All mature fruit, including quinces, should be stripped from trees by April 30 to prevent fruit flies overwintering.

If you are not able or willing to maintain your fruit trees and control fruit flies, you should seriously consider removing the tree.

Pick up fallen fruit

Fallen fruit is often infested with fruit fly. The fruit fly lives in the soil for part of its life cycle so leaving fallen fruit on the ground will only increase the problem. Dispose of fallen fruit the same way as you dispose of unwanted picked fruit – described above.

Cover sprays

Cover sprays cover the tree and fruit with pesticide to kill fruit flies resting in the tree and to kill maggots in the fruit. Sprays include dimethoate, fenthion and trichlorfon. Each of these insecticides work best on specific crops. The labels should be checked for crops, rates, frequency of application and withholding periods before use.

Bait sprays or splash bait

Bait sprays are a mixture of an attractant, such as protein bait, and an insecticide. Generally, much smaller quantities of chemical are used compared with cover sprays. Bait sprays attract fruit flies to the protein bait where they die after eating the bait and insecticide. Bait sprays are generally applied to foliage and not to the fruit.

Bait spray components include the insecticides maldison or chlorpyrifos and yeast autolysate as the attractant. Mixing directions and rates are included on the insecticide product labels.



Male lures or annihilation blocks

These are based on a male attractant and will only attract and kill the male fly. Male lures are a mixture of the male attractant (pheromone) and an insecticide in a pad. The lures are generally hung in trees. These are not to be used inside the Fruit Fly Exclusion Zone in southern New South Wales.

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